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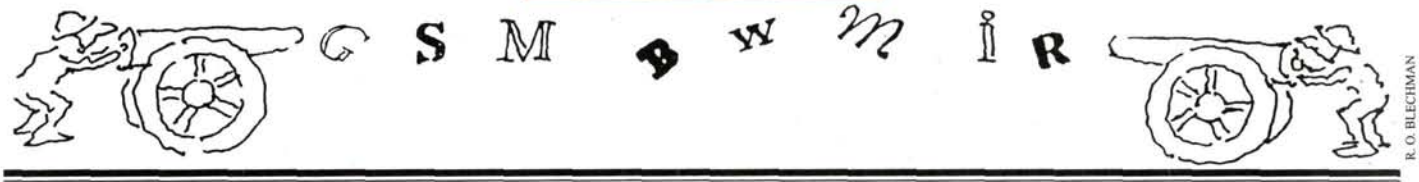

WHOSE IRAQ? SISTANI'S OR SADR'S?

Washington, DC

■ Naomi Klein deserves credit for being among the first to report how the United States has been privatizing the Iraqi economy without any legal authority to do so. But her analysis of the Iraqi resistance is wrong. In her October 18 "Lookout" column, Klein at least qualifies her September 13 defense of Muqtada al-Sadr, the young leader of Shiite insurgents, by calling out his "dangerous fundamentalism." But she still sticks to her claim that his militia's resistance "represents the overwhelmingly mainstream sentiment in Iraq."

Instead of underscoring that the more respected, elder Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, enjoys far more support among Iraq's Shiite majority population, Klein now paints Sadr as being allegedly more resolute than Sistani in standing up to the US occupation. Klein also misleadingly suggests that it is Sadr rather than Sistani who has most consistently demanded that the United States allow for direct elections in Iraq. She also fails to tell her readers that it was Sistani who brokered the recent cease-fire between Sadr's militia and US forces over Najaf.

Klein also exaggerates Sadr's strength, writing that "he is the single greatest threat to US military and economic control of Iraq." Really? Sadr has announced his plans to disarm his militia and participate in the US-backed elections scheduled for January. If so, then the resistance would be all but over, according to Klein's logic.

Yet Klein deserves credit for one point, as she finally acknowledges in her latest piece that there are moderate Iraqis who wish to participate in US-backed elections. She correctly writes that "the current choice in Iraq" is "between open elections—which risk handing power to fundamentalists but would also allow secular and moderate religious forces to organize—and rigged elections designed to leave the country in the hands of Iyad Allawi and the rest of his CIA/Mukhabarat-trained thugs, fully dependent on Washington for both money and might." FRANK SMYTH

KLEIN REPLIES

Toronto

■ Frank Smyth quotes only a portion of my statement about Sadr: "Muqtada al-Sadr and his followers are not just another group of generic terrorists out to kill Americans; their opposition to the occupation represents the overwhelmingly mainstream sentiment in Iraq." The meaning of this sentence is absolutely clear: It is their opposition to the occupation that is overwhelmingly mainstream, not Sadr or the Mahdi Army themselves. In addition, I have discussed Sadr's dangerous fundamentalism elsewhere.

I also clearly stated that Sistani has more political support in Iraq than Sadr and have written extensively on Sistani's brave and principled calls for elections. But after huge pro-democracy rallies in January, Sistani decided to call off the street protests, hoping the UN would intervene and insure that elections take place. The UN, sadly, sided with US occupation authorities. Similarly, after strongly opposing the interim Constitution, which locked in neoliberal reforms, Sistani eventually allowed the document to be signed. He did so because he understandably feared an outbreak of civil war after the Ashoura bombings in March. These are not my judgments, they are facts, just as it is a fact that the longer democracy is denied in Iraq, the more support for Sadr grows. NAOMI KLEIN

AFGHAN WOMEN—STILL NOT FREE

Kabul, Afghanistan

■ Ann Jones correctly observes that Afghan women have not been "liberated" and that they still suffer tragic violations of their rights. But her facts stop there. Her "Letter From Afghanistan" [Oct. 4] is more fiction than fact.

Those of us who have been working in Afghanistan for decades to improve women's status face the obstacles of a patriarchal culture, restrictive laws, bad security and a poor economy, all of which limit women's choices of where they live and what they can do. We do fight to change the culture and the law to respect women's rights. But this is not an easy job or one that can be done overnight. In the meantime, we try to provide immediate assistance to make women's lives a little better.

When no one else would help the "Herati girls," the Shuhada Organization set up a shelter for them in Kabul. Afghan culture does not allow women to be on their own, and these young women were severely traumatized and without resources or social support.

It is absolutely wrong to say that "in Kabul things got worse fast" for the girls. They were in a shelter, not a jail. They were provided with psychological counseling, healthcare, literacy courses and anything else that they needed. The shelter, like every NGO, had guards because of the poor security here. This was for the safety of the girls, who otherwise would be at risk for kidnapping and violence.

Operating within the limits of Afghanistan, we let the girls decide about their futures. We offered them the opportunity to study nursing at our hospital in central Afghanistan. We did not send the young women to train as nurses in a "desperate" attempt "to get rid" of them. Nursing is one of the few jobs open to women, and healthcare workers are desperately needed. Some of the women decided to train as nurses.

Others wanted to get married. They made this request to Medica Mondiale's Afghan doctors and staff. This is not necessarily the decision that we would have made, but we made marriage arrangements as the young women requested. Jones criticizes us for not asking a bride price. Is she suggesting that we should have sold them to their husbands?

Also, the Shuhada Organization is not "fronted by Dr. Sima Samar," as Jones writes. I founded the organization in 1989 and have built and directed it ever since. We are the largest Afghan-woman-led organization in the country and run fifty-five schools, three hospitals, twelve clinics and many other programs to help women and girls. The situation here for women is horrendous. But this is Afghanistan, not Germany, and our strategies must reflect this reality. SIMA SAMAR

Director, Shuhada Organization; Chair, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission

JONES REPLIES

Zimbabwe

■ I regret that Sima Samar seems to have read my account as a personal indictment. As I acknowledged, she has long been a distinguished leader in the cause of women's rights in Afghanistan, and I have the greatest respect for her personal courage, dedication and hard work in support of Afghan women. There is no question that Dr. Samar and members of Shuhada, like everyone involved in this case, acted from the best motives and in the girls' best interests.

Nevertheless, I must stand by the facts as I presented them—facts gained from documents in the case and extensive interviews with officials of all the organizations involved, including Dr. Samar, and with several of the Herati shelter girls themselves. Curiously enough, although Dr. Samar says I have my facts wrong, her own account matches mine in most important respects: that the girls were abused, traumatized and in need of help; that they were held under guard in Kabul; that they were visited by doctors and counselors; that some of them were sent to nurses' training and others were given in marriage. She departs from my account only to say that the idea of arranging marriages came not from her or her organization but from the girls themselves, in requests to staff members of the German NGO Medica Mondiale. The Medica Mondiale staff members and the girls I interviewed, however, attribute the

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EDITORIALS

Stand and Fight

The fight is over.

Let the fight begin.

First, we grieve for what was lost—the opportunity, which flickered for a moment early on election day and then died, to steer the nation onto a more reasonable and less destructive path. At the same time, we salute the efforts of those many millions who mobilized themselves to achieve a better outcome.

Next, we are angry about what the election of George W. Bush portends for the country. Bush's victory will tighten the grip of the Republican Party's virtual monopoly on the institutions of the federal government. The checks and balances on presidential power contemplated by the country's Founders are in tatters. Bush's election gives him the chance to shape the Supreme Court to his purposes: two branches of the government possibly lost in a single election. *Roe v. Wade* and a host of other protections of basic human rights are at risk. Bush is bound to try to assist the Christian right in its fantastical efforts to "Christianize" public institutions. Further inroads into the liberties of Americans are likely, through a "Patriot Act II" and other legislation as well as by executive fiat. In the near term, a terrible acceleration of the violence in Iraq may be in the offing. In the longer term, new aggressive wars may be launched. The transfer through regressive tax cuts of hundreds of billions more from the poor and the middle class to the rich and the super-rich has been announced.

Anger should lead to action. TV anchors and the candidates themselves call for a new civility and ask the public to "come together" as one people. Pay no attention. The progressive movement in this country has suffered a huge reversal. But the struggle for the country's future—and its very soul—was anything but settled. It will be renewed at a higher level of intensity, and for higher stakes. There must be a fierce, protracted resistance in defense of democracy. *The Nation* dedicates itself to this cause. As a journalistic institution unbeholden to and uninfluenced by any economic interest or political power, we will continue to provide truthful information not available on a timely basis—or sometimes at all—from the mainstream news media, which too often during the campaign took slanders and pumped them up into running news stories while failing to hold the Administration accountable for its exaggerations and outright lies.

What might the Democratic Party learn from this election? First, that a posture of meekness, resignation and accommodation leads to failure. At no time during the campaign did the Democratic candidate discuss in an honest way the single most important issue facing the country: how to disengage from the war in Iraq. Second, that money, while it can indeed make a major difference, is not the party's problem; the familiar excuse that Republicans raise more campaign funds was extinguished this year. Nor was the country at large indifferent to Bush's alliance with industrial plunderers and his shameful schemes to dismantle social, economic and environmental protections; almost half the electorate voted against these things.

It would be a mistake to adopt the television stereotype of red states and blue states. Many states of both colors were in fact almost evenly divided. The Democratic elite are out of touch, as Republicans claim. They have lost reliable connections to ordinary people, including some long loyal constituencies. John Kerry did not lose this election in the South (those defeats were fully expected). He lost it in leading industrial states that, given their economic condition, should have belonged to the Democrats. Kerry advocated establishment views, on trade and globalization, for instance, that distanced him from his natural constituency. He could

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not find the words and images to speak authentically about their lives. He did not offer plausible remedies to their pain.

Events are likely to create new chances for opposition and resistance. At home and abroad, Bush has inherited his own messes. The sputtering American economy is now Bush's to repair. A much larger threat to his presidency is the deepening crisis of the global economy, now burdened by swollen US trade deficits and towering indebtedness to foreign creditors, including major trading partners like China. The establishment in both parties avoided this subject throughout the campaign, perhaps because they know it will mean a very painful economic reckoning.

The debacle in Iraq that Bush created will also be his to face. At least half of the country understands that the war in Iraq is unwinnable. The most immediate need, perhaps, is for a revived antiwar movement, which not only calls for a withdrawal from Iraq but opposes and prevents new bloody adventures.

The Democratic Party is not the only vehicle for change. Historically, that party's finest moments have come when it was pushed into action from outside by popular movements, from the labor movement to the civil rights movement to the women's movement to the gay-rights movement. Such movements—independent of the Democratic Party but powerfully influencing it—must foster and increase their strength. *The Nation* will support these movements.

We must all stand and fight.

COMMENT

Dark Days Ahead

It's another four years—this time with a legitimate win behind him—and the prospects for George W. Bush's second term are grim. He is stronger politically; the Democratic opposition is weaker, especially in the Senate, where the Republicans gained several seats and closed in on a filibuster-proof super-majority. Bush and the GOP demonstrated that they could locate and mobilize their voters. The Democrats—even with big-money efforts (America Coming Together and its ad-buying sister outfit raised and spent more than $200 million)—could not match them. Bush now has more power than he did before the election. He will use it. And he is likely to adopt the game plan that served him well at the start of his first term: Move fast and move hard.

To what ends? Bush signaled his intentions before the election: partial privatization of Social Security, tax "reform" and tort "reform." And there is no reason not to take him at his word. On election night, Bush adviser Karen Hughes was talking about Social Security before the counting was done. "Ronald Reagan used his second term to justify nothing and to lay out an agenda for nothing," says Grover Norquist, a leading GOP activist/strategist. "Bush has already started laying out a vision of what he calls 'the ownership society.' It's a coherent worldview." It not only covers partial privatization of Social Security but the expansion of IRAs and health savings accounts. The point, says Norquist, is to wrap a Social Security initiative in a broader package with PR appeal.

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COMMENT

Norquist also envisions Bush pressing for a business-oriented tax cut before considering tax "reform." (Such a scheme will be billed as simplification, but it could also rejigger the tax code in favor of Bush's preferred beneficiaries: the rich.) And Bush will "shove" tort reform, Norquist says, "up the Democrats' backside."

The trend lines seem obvious. Bush can be expected to continue his undeclared war on environmental safeguards, to propose expanding the Patriot Act and to maintain his effective ban on stem-cell research. He has shown no willingness to reconsider decisions that have allowed various security needs—such as those at chemical plants and ports—to go unaddressed. He will further pursue policies that feed the gargantuan deficits and will deny the overwhelming fiscal fiasco. Before the election, his Administration was preparing for severe cuts in social programs. He may not take explicit steps to outlaw abortion. But he won't have to be explicit. It is inconceivable that Bush will not have the opportunity to appoint at least one Supreme Court Justice—William Rehnquist may provide the first vacancy—and he could get the chance to fill up to four openings. A Bush Court would be predisposed toward overturning *Roe v. Wade*. Presumably it would undermine environmental laws, be hostile to gay rights and put into action the goals of the right-wing "federalist" movement, which hails states' rights and property rights.

"On foreign policy, the big question mark," says Norquist, "is, What has the President and the Republican Party learned from Iraq? Did he learn it was a bridge too far and doesn't want to do three more of these? Or will he think, 'We got elected, let's do Egypt'?" Bush, Norquist adds, could end up at odds with conservatives on the "empire front." He observes, "If this is perpetual war to achieve perpetual peace, then it's out of sync with conservative members of Congress and his own base. They don't want a permanent garrison state with high taxes, a draft and a big government." But Bush has committed himself to "staying the course" (whatever it is) in Iraq and also to remaking the Middle East. He has fully embraced the hubris and arrogance of the neocons. Why should Bush change his fundamental national security views when he has escaped punishment for hyping a threat, misleading the country into an unnecessary war and alienating much of the globe?

The next four years could be dark ones. It is true that in recent decades second terms have been burdened by scandal (Watergate, Iran/*contra*, Monicagate). And the pattern could hold. Obstruction of justice in the Joe Wilson leak case? A Bush crony or relative caught profiting improperly in Iraq (Iraqgate)? And second-term administrations have often lost steam, as senior officials depart for high-paying private-sector jobs (while their White House connections are fresh) and are replaced by the B team. But Bush has often defied history: winning (sort of) in 2000 during a time of seeming prosperity and peace, protecting his party's position in Congress in mid-term elections and achieving re-election when the economy was down. History provides little comfort. And certainly the politics will be ugly. The Bush camp has been rewarded for its tactics of distortion and derision. Bush and Dick Cheney appealed to people's fears. And the lesson for them and the Republicans is clear: This worked, let's do more.

Who will lead the bloodied and weakened Democrats? Senate majority leader Tom Daschle was forcibly retired in South Dakota. Is there a successor who can do battle in the legislative mud pit and be a public force? Senator Hillary Clinton won't be vying for the job. It is a lousy launch pad for a presidential campaign. She, John Edwards, Howard Dean, Wesley Clark and others—Senator Joe Biden, Senator Evan Bayh, Al Gore, Governor Bill Richardson, Governor Tom Vilsack—will be busy jockeying for tactical advantage in 2008, as the progressive and centrist wings of the Democratic Party resume their ongoing brawl. Was Kerry too liberal? Was he too moderate? This debate has already begun.

But it was not just the Kerry campaign that fell short. The party professionals have much to answer for. The organizers did not churn out the necessary Democratic voters. The Dems in charge of Ohio misread the reality on the ground. Karl Rove, Bush's über-strategist, apparently succeeded in luring hordes of social conservatives to the polls in Ohio and elsewhere with anti–gay marriage initiatives. The so-called brains of the Democratic Party had no countervailing strategy.

There will be hard and dreadful days ahead for both the Democrats and the nation. The only good news is that the final tally—51 to 48 percent—demonstrates that there remains a great split in America. Praise that divide and prepare for the worst.

DAVID CORN

CALVIN TRILLIN

In the Executive Suite of a Major Insurance Company, As Dark Clouds Gather Over New York State...

The CEO now wants a drink—
And something stronger than a spritzer.
His worry's not a storm or flood;
The dread calamity is Spitzer.

Hammered

Any election result that gives Tom DeLay cause for celebration—and, make no mistake, the 2004 election gave the dark prince of Congress plenty to celebrate—ought to send a sharp shiver through the American body politic. Indeed, as depressing as the presidential election results were, the news from House and Senate contests around the country was worse. Now—or at least for as long as he can keep ahead of his many legal and ethical challenges—DeLay will be the dominant figure in Congress.

House Republicans went into the 2004 election cycle with a

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COMMENT

227–205 advantage over the Democrats; they're likely to finish it with a 233–199 advantage. That's not a big shift, but it does represent a dramatic victory for DeLay, the GOP majority leader, who redrew the political map of Texas in order to increase his grip on the House. Of five Democratic incumbents who had their districts drawn out from under them, four lost. Only Representative Chet Edwards, who in one of the nicer bits of electoral irony represents George W. Bush's ranch in Crawford, won re-election. The one other bit of good news was that the Democratic incumbent whom DeLay really wanted to beat, progressive Lloyd Doggett, outsmarted the man they call The Hammer by moving into a new district and building a coalition of working-class Latinos and Austin-area liberals who gave him an easy win—and status as the Lone Star antithesis of DeLay.

A few other races also went against DeLay's plan. Georgia Democrat Cynthia McKinney fought her way back from a 2002 defeat and promises to be a welcome thorn in the side of both Republican and Democratic leaders. Colorado Democrat John Salazar, a rancher who ran on the all-but-forgotten theme that Republican policies are bad for rural America, won a GOP seat. The senior Republican in the House, Phil Crane of Illinois, got beaten by Democrat Melissa Bean, whose campaign focused on the need to protect the environment from the right-wing wrecking crew in Congress. Bean will join a number of new women in the House, including such progressives as Pennsylvania's Allyson Schwartz and Florida's Debbie Wasserman Schultz, both of whom emphasized the need for real healthcare reform.

Unfortunately, the good news tended to be about individual triumphs because there was no clear set of Democratic themes and issues in Congressional races. Democrats may get more focused once Congress comes back into session; since they will be unable to pass much legislation, their primary task now is to hold the line against an energized Republican majority that promises a DeLay-driven agenda of more tax cuts for the rich, opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and privatizing Social Security. Minority leader Nancy Pelosi, who after the Texas losses should feel less need to play to the party's right, may get a chance to fight one of those battles soon if Republicans try to use a lame-duck session of the House to pass Bush's Central America Free Trade Agreement, which would extend NAFTA-style free-trade policies south of Mexico. Another fight on re-authorization of the Administration's "fast track" authority to negotiate such agreements could come in March.

Pelosi will have her work cut out for her, however. And the Senate will be a less effective buffer against DeLay's extremism than it was in Bush's first term. Despite decent recruitment of candidates and solid fundraising by the Senatorial Campaign Committee chair Jon Corzine, the Democrats had a disastrous November 2. Minority leader Tom Daschle became the first Senate leader to lose his seat since a young Arizonan named Barry Goldwater swept out majority leader Ernest McFarland. The Democrats lost five open Southern seats that had been theirs. They also lost a contest for a Republican seat in Oklahoma that seemed at one point to be winnable, and for the seat held by Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, whose appointment by her father had supposedly left her vulnerable. Had Democrats moved quickly enough, they might have picked up a GOP seat in Kentucky, where incumbent Jim Bunning's bizarre behavior almost shifted the seat to Democrat Dan Mongiardo. But money for Mongiardo was too little, too late.

Democrats did pick up GOP seats in Colorado, where Ken Salazar won comfortably, and in Illinois, where Barack Obama was a landslide winner. Obama, to his credit, came out fighting, noting on election night that "you still need sixty votes in the Senate to make things happen." The likely new Senate Democratic leader, Nevada's Harry Reid, should follow Obama's feisty example. Reid, who sided with Daschle when the South Dakotan endorsed Bush's request for authority to use force in Iraq, would do well to note that while Daschle went down, the Democrats who broke ranks with their party leadership to oppose the resolution were re-elected. Among them is Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold, who also clashed with Daschle before becoming the only senator to oppose the Patriot Act. Against a millionaire opponent who earned strong GOP backing, Feingold criticized the war, defended the Constitution and was re-elected by a landslide—running almost 150,000 votes ahead of the Democratic presidential ticket.

JOHN NICHOLS

Fears of a World Divided

London

Disillusionment is the most painful of emotions. For many Europeans who wanted to see George Bush's first presidency as an aberration in America's history, his win on November 2 will confirm a frightening truth: More than half of US voters really do wish to live in a fortress of solipsism, a faith-based bubble indifferent to the rest of the world except insofar as America needs it to maintain its oil-based lifestyle. If, as some people suggested, all of us out here whose lives will be affected by the US election had had a chance to vote, the outcome would have been quite different. A couple of weeks before the election, a newspaper survey of public opinion in ten countries, including Russia and Britain, found that respondents, by a 2-to-1 margin, wanted a Kerry victory. In Europe, only the Poles hoped to see Bush elected. (Of course, many Israelis are also happy—to quote Sharon, "Bush is the best friend Israel ever had"—although few Palestinians had any illusions about what they could hope for from the Democrats.)

Inevitably the postelection media were full of tactful equivocations, brave faces and the search for silver linings. Perhaps G.W. Bush II will be different from G.W. Bush I; perhaps he will see the need to heal the rifts he has opened up, in the world as well as in America; perhaps a concern for his place in history rather than the next election will induce him to take global warming seriously. But as they talk about their hopes, the radio pundits—conservatives as well as social democrats—sound as if they're still rooting for Kerry, for a President who, in the words of one British Foreign Office insider, would change, if not the policies, at least "the atmospherics."

But if most of Europe's people are depressed and disappointed, some of their leaders are privately relieved. Germany's Gerhard

(Continued on Page 21)

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Don't Say We Didn't Warn You

"Why Is He Losing?" was the title I initially gave my last column here two weeks ago, and my *Nation* editor, Roane Carey, worried that this was maybe too pessimistic, amid supposed portents of a sudden swell for Kerry. So we called the column "You Can't Blame Nader for This." Both headlines turned out to be true, and here we are amid the ashes of a terrible defeat for the Democrats and for liberal hopes.

A distraught young person called me in tears on the morning after. I tried to console her by saying that things looked pretty dark in 1980, when Ronald Reagan and the Republicans swept into power, yet only twelve years later we had a draft-dodging adulterer ensconced in the White House and the Democrats back in control of Congress for a couple of years.

This didn't help, so I rushed her back to 1956, when Eisenhower was re-elected and the skies looked dark. But only four years later we had a Democratic war-hero adulterer on the parapet of Camelot and the Summer of Love only seven years down the road.

By this time she was crying so hard she could barely hold her cell phone, an instrument owned by all those millions that hopeful Democrats kept explaining the pollsters were overlooking. I told her I'd call back in an hour or so, as soon as I'd rounded up a silver lining, beyond the victory for the dopers in Montana. She was one in a generation that turned out to be part of the Democrats' innumerable problems. So much for Rock the Vote, for Eminem. The youth vote (18 to 24) stayed the same as in 2000. The turnout among the 25 to 35 cohort was 4 percent less than in 2000.

Youth, so an exit-poll survey (by the Edison Media Research Group and Mitofsky International) tells us, had the same concerns, in the same order of priorities, as older voters. From the top: the economy, moral values, Iraq, terrorism. Bush cleaned up on moral values and the war on terror, with his own supporters rejecting the equation he himself made, between the war on terror and the war in Iraq (where Kerry had the edge).

Moral values—this brings us to the fact that the United States is a Christian nation, as most recently confirmed by one of those regular surveys conducted by the University of Chicago, which reported in 2002 that the adult population of the homeland is 52 percent Protestant, 26 percent Catholic, 3 percent Christians of some other stripe, 1.5 percent Jewish, 3 percent other religions and 14 percent holding "no religion." Of the Christians, 25 percent go to church once a week or more.

Right after the sad call from the young thing that Wednesday morning, I got a message from my old friend Wilbur, who lives not far from Spartanburg, South Carolina, the buckle of the Bible Belt. "We did it," he crowed in high good humor. "The Bible thumpers and the gun toters." True, in serious part.

The Democrats spent the year wasting money and passion attacking Ralph Nader, whose early predictions of his ultimate drawing power at the polls turned out to be on the money. If the Democrats had wanted to identify a serious saboteur of their chances they should have homed in on Mayor Gavin Newsom of San Francisco, whose OK to gay marriage saw all those same-sex couples on the steps of City Hall embracing, on every front page and nightly news in America. Ohio had a proposition banning gay marriage, and the drive to put it on the ballot and push it to victory brought the Christians out in their hundreds of thousands, marching to the polls across the rubble of their state's economy.

The Republicans rallied their base. The Democrats failed at this crucial test of the vitality of any mass political party. The South is lost to them. John Edwards failed to recover a single state. How much better it would have been for Kerry to have had on the ticket the Rust Belt's Dick Gephardt, who could have won Missouri, maybe Iowa, and put Kerry in the White House.

The day of the vote I picked up the pre-election issue of *The New York Review of Books*, with the cream of the liberal intelligentsia pouring out denunciations of Bush. Scarcely one could bring himself (yes, all fourteen were men, overwhelmingly white) to mention the difficult name Kerry. Russell Baker is one who did, and he wrote exactly what I've said in column after column this year: "The case against John Kerry is that not being George Bush is an inadequate qualification for being president of the United States."

Any successful presidential candidate has to project himself as a chapter in the American epic: the man from Plains, the man from Hope, traveling through light and shade, but always the same voyager in his inner essence. Where was Kerry from? Somewhere in the greater Boston area, a transient between six mansions. What was his inner essence? Kerry was like a man in front of an ATM, trying to figure out which of his credit cards had a positive balance: the war card, the peace card, the prosecutor card. Whatever card he came up with never impressed enough of the voters. Bush? Every time someone excavated his idle, privileged youth, his evasions of military service, his drunken years, his business disasters, even his failures in the first hours of 9/11, all it did was confirm to most Americans that lives have many chapters and rebirths along the journey to redemption.

November 2, 2004, marks a terrible defeat for the liberal elites, whether represented by Paul Krugman in the *New York Times*, by Michael Moore in his baseball cap, by the *New York Review*, by that vast complex of delusion, corruption and self-aggrandizement known as the Democratic Party. Its establishment is truly in crisis now, from the labor leaders who squandered millions in vehement efforts to keep Ralph Nader off the ballot to the public interest groups that gave Kerry the green light to waffle on all the crucial issues, to the "strategists" who took their cut on the campaign ads and got it all wrong. I hadn't the heart to warn the weeping young person that they'll be back in 2008, as wrong as ever, and that mass movements have to build up momentum over decades, not in the span of one election campaign, swollen with electronic hype. ■

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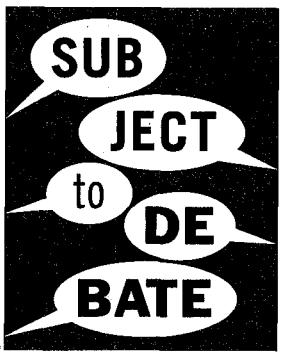
KATHA POLLITT

Mourn



Please. Just right now, don't say, "Don't mourn, organize" or "Pray for the dead but fight like hell for the living." Don't explain Kerry's loss with Harry Truman's quip that voters will always choose the real Republican over the fake Republican. Don't let's talk about Eugene Debs and Fighting Bob La Follette and how important it is to lose and lose and lose until you win. It all seems a bit inadequate, a bit quaint and this-land-is-your-landish, the left's commitment to doing more of what we've been doing, only harder.

I also don't want to hear carping criticisms of John Kerry. Given that he is a fallible mortal, he was a pretty good candidate. Sure, he made mistakes—not responding instantly to the Swift Boat liars, wearing that silly goose-hunting get-up, letting Bush get away with saying drugs from Canada will kill you—but Bush committed his share of gaffes as well. Any candidate does. Think back to the actual human beings running in the primaries: Who would have done better in the real-world mix of competing claims and hard choices and twenty-four-hour spin? Dennis Kucinich? Al Sharpton? I admired Howard Dean, but face it, the Republican attack machine would have shredded him in a week.

The Kerry campaign may have been a broth with too many cooks, but it did a lot of things right. It raised a ton of money from small and first-time donors instead of relying on big donors, as the Democrats have tended to do for the last decade. It had fantastic labor support. It had MoveOn, America Coming Together and the other 527s, which mobilized intensity, creativity, time and cash and evoked a surge of grassroots progressive activism like nothing in living memory. Hundreds of thousands of people—Democrats, leftists, Greens, independents, Deaniacs, even a few stray Republicans—knocked themselves out registering voters, phone-banking, going door to door; for many, like me, this was the first time they'd volunteered for a presidential campaign. Kerry had the energy of millions, black and white, enraged by Florida 2000, by Iraq, by Bush's governing from the hard right without anything resembling a mandate—people who were willing to stand in long lines in the hot sun or November chill for however many hours it took to cast their ballot. Kerry may not have displayed passion, but his supporters had plenty to spare.

It's an article of faith among progressives that moving to the left wins votes, and I have written many columns in witness to the creed. But what if it isn't true? What if it wins fewer votes than being a liar and a bigot? One leftist intellectual I saw at an election-night party suggested to me that Kerry shot himself in the foot when he didn't throw Abu Ghraib in Bush's face and proclaim that as President he would never permit torture. I would have wept with joy to hear that speech, but where is the evidence that significant numbers of voters not already committed to Kerry—let alone voters who supported Bush—were outraged by Abu Ghraib? Did I miss the demonstrations, the sit-ins, the teach-ins, the lying down in traffic by swing voters and nonvoters to force the Bush Administration to account for this outrageous crime against humanity?

Similarly, some were impatient with Kerry's "nuanced" position on gay marriage, but is there any reason on God's earth to believe there are lots of gay-friendly swing voters or nonvoters out there just waiting for a candidate who wants to let Mary Cheney wed Rosie O'Donnell? Everything we know—the passage of all eleven state bans on gay marriage, for example, some of which go so far as to ban civil unions as well—suggests that Kerry understood quite well where the people were.

OK, you say, that's one of those pesky newfangled cultural-elite issues that alienate the heartland, which yearns for the old-time religion of "economic populism." Kerry's health insurance plan wasn't perfect, it wasn't single-payer, but it would have insured all children and about half the adults currently uninsured—26.7 million people!—and it would have been paid for by canceling Bush's tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, something populists should go for. No sale. His plan to help young people pay for college wasn't perfect either, but it was a lot better than what young people are getting now. Result: Young people constituted their usual pathetic proportion of the total vote. And this is *after* the best efforts of P Diddy, Christina Aguilera, Eminem and virtually every other pop icon except Britney Spears.

The logic of the "Left Is More" position seems to be this: What people really want is a Debs or La Follette who will smite the corporations, turn swords into plowshares, share the wealth and banish John Ashcroft to a cabin in the Ozarks. But since the Democratic Party denies them their first choice, they will—naturally!—pick a hard-right warmaker of staggering incompetence and no regard for either the Constitution or the needs of the people. Better that than settle for a liberal centrist who would only raise the minimum wage by two dollars. In other words, these proto-progressives will consciously choose the greater evil out of what—spite? pride? I scorn your half-measures, sir! Keep your small change!

This makes no sense to me as an explanation of the recent election. It doesn't explain, for example, why Republicans gained in both House and Senate. It doesn't explain why Californians rejected a referendum to amend their three-strikes law so that twice-convicted felons wouldn't get twenty-five years for shoplifting, or why Arizonans voted solidly to bar undocumented aliens from obtaining a wide range of essential public services and to require public servants to report them if they try. It doesn't explain why the Kansas school board is once again a chorus line of creationists.

Maybe this time the voters chose what they actually want: Nationalism, pre-emptive war, order not justice, "safety" through torture, backlash against women and gays, a gulf between haves and have-nots, government largesse for their churches and a my-way-or-the-highway President.

Where, I wonder, does that leave us? ■

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ARTICLES

The Costs of War: Letters From the Home Front

Almost a year ago, Tom Engelhardt, the editor of tomdispatch.com, began a correspondence with Teri Wills Allison, a mother from Texas whose son is in the military in Iraq. Out of that grew an invitation to Allison to write about how the situation personally affected her as a parent. The resulting essay, published in mid-October at tomdispatch.com, brought a flood of e-mail, selections from which Engelhardt also published at the site. "One thing struck me," Engelhardt said in introducing the letters. "Amid all the pundits opining and journalists reporting on the state of the nation, we almost never hear the voices of Americans who, like Teri Allison, have to deal with the fallout from the mess this Administration has created." Engelhardt said he was also struck by the offers of help directed to Allison and some of the people she wrote about. In their generosity of spirit, he wrote, the responses "offer a kind of hope and renewal all their own." With the permission of all those involved, and with thanks to tomdispatch.com, a project of The Nation Institute, we offer Allison's letter and a sampling of the responses. —The Editors

TERI WILLS ALLISON

Teri Wills Allison, a massage therapist and a member of Military Families Speak Out, lives near Austin, Texas.

I am not a pacifist. I am a mother. By nature, the two are incompatible, for even a cottontail rabbit will fight to protect her young. Violent action may well be necessary in defense of one's family or home (and that definition of home can easily be extended to community and beyond); but violence, no matter how warranted, always takes a heavy toll. And violence taken to the extreme—war—exacts the most extreme costs. A just war there may be, but there is no such thing as a good war. And the burdens of an unjust war are insufferable.

I know something about the costs of an unjust war, for my son, Nick—an infantryman in the US Army—is fighting one in Iraq. I don't speak for my son. I couldn't even if I wanted to, for all I hear through the Mom Filter is: "I'm fine, Mom, don't worry, I'm fine, everything is fine, fine, fine, we're fine, just fine." But I can tell you what some of the costs are as I live and breathe them.

First, the minor stuff: my constant feelings of dread and despair; the sweeping rage that alternates with petrifying fear; the torrents of tears that accompany a maddening sense of helplessness and vulnerability. My son is involved in a deadly situation that should never have been. I feel like a mother lion in a cage, my grown cub in danger, and all I can do is throw myself furiously against the bars…impotent to protect him. My tolerance for bullshit is zero, and I've snapped off more heads in the last several months than in all my forty-eight years combined.

For the first time in my life, and with great amazement and sorrow, I feel what can only be described as hatred. It took me a long time to admit it, but there it is. I loathe the hubris, the callousness and the lies of those in the Bush Administration who led us into this war. Truth be told, I even loathe the fallible and very human purveyors of those lies. I feel no satisfaction in this admission, only sadness and recognition. And hope that—given time—I can do better. I never wanted to hate anyone.

Xanax helps a bit. At least it holds the debilitating panic attacks somewhat at bay, so I can fake it through one more day. A friend in the same situation relies on a six-pack of beer every night; another has drifted into a la-la land of denial. Nice.

Then there is the wedge that's been driven between part of my extended family and me. They don't see this war as one based on lies. They've become evangelical believers in a false faith, swallowing Bush's fear-mongering, his chickenhawk posturing and strutting, and cheering his "bring 'em on" attitude as a sign of strength and resoluteness. Perhaps life is just easier that way. These are the same people who have known my son since he was a baby, who have held him and loved him and played with him, who have bought him birthday presents and taken him fishing. I don't know them anymore.

But enough of my whining. My son is alive and in one piece, unlike the 1,102 dead and 7,782 severely wounded American soldiers; which equals 8,884 blood-soaked uniforms, and doesn't even count the estimated 20,000 troops—not publicly reported by the Defense Department—medevacked out of Iraq for "non-combat related injuries." Every death, every injury, burns like a knife in my gut, for these are all America's sons and daughters. And I know I'm not immune to that knock on my door either.

And what of the Iraqi people? How many casualties have they suffered? How many tens of thousands of dead and wounded? How many Iraqi mothers have wept, weep now, for their lost children? I fear we will never know, for though the Pentagon has begun—almost gleefully—counting Iraqi insurgent deaths, there is little chance of getting an accurate verification of civilian casualties. You know, "collateral damage."

Yes, my son is alive and, as far as I know, well. I wish I could say the same for some of his friends.

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One young man who was involved in heavy fighting during the invasion is now so debilitated by post-traumatic stress disorder that he routinely has flashbacks in which he smells burning flesh; he can't close his eyes without seeing people's heads squashed like frogs in the middle of the road, or dead and dying women and children, burned, bleeding and dismembered. Sometimes he hears the sounds of battle raging around him, and he has been hospitalized twice for suicidal tendencies. When he was home on leave, this 27-year-old man would crawl into his mother's room at night and sob in her lap for hours. Instead of getting treatment for PTSD, he has just received a "less than honorable" discharge from the Army. The rest of his unit redeploys to Iraq in February.

Another friend of Nick's was horrifically wounded when his Humvee stopped on an IED [improvised explosive device]. He didn't even have time to instinctively raise his arm and protect his face. Shrapnel ripped through his right eye, obliterating it to gooey shreds, and penetrated his brain. He has been in a coma since March. His mother spends every day with him in the hospital; his wife is devastated and their 1½-year-old daughter doesn't know her daddy. But my son's friend is a fighter and so is making steady, incremental progress toward consciousness. He has a long hard struggle ahead of him, one that he need never have faced—and his family has had to fight every step of the way to get him the treatment he needs. So much for supporting the troops.

I go visit him every week, and it breaks my heart to see the burned faces, the missing limbs, the limps, the vacant stares one encounters in an acute-care military hospital. In front of the hospital there is a cannon, and every afternoon they blast that sucker off. You should see all the poor guys hit the pavement. Though many requests have been made to discontinue the practice for the sake of the returning wounded, the general in charge refuses. Boom.

Then there is Nick's 24-year-old Kurdish friend, the college-educated son of teachers, multilingual and highly intelligent. He works as a translator for the US Army for $600 a month and lives on base, where he is relatively safe. (Translators for private contractors, also living on base, make $7,200 a month.) He wants to travel to the States to continue his education, but no visas are now being issued from Iraq. Once the Army is through with him, will they just send him back into the streets, a virtual dead man for having worked with the Americans? My son places a high premium on loyalty to family and friends, and he has been raised to walk his talk. This must be a harsh and embittering lesson on just how unprincipled the rest of the world can be. My heart aches for his Iraqi friend as well as for him.

A year ago in January, when Nick left for Iraq, I granted myself permission to be stark-raving mad for the length of his deployment. By god, I've done a good job of it, without apology or excuse. And I dare say there are at least 139,999 other moms who have done the same—though taking troop rotations into consideration to maintain that magical number of 140,000 in the sand could put the number of crazed military moms as high as 300,000, maybe more. Right now, you might want to be careful about cutting in line in front of a middle-aged woman.

I know there are military moms who view the war in Iraq through different ideological lenses than mine. Sometimes I envy them. God, how much easier it must be to believe one's son or daughter is fighting for a just and noble cause! But no matter how hard I scrutinize the invasion and occupation of Iraq, all I see are lies, corruption and greed fueled by a powerful addiction to oil. Real soldiers get blown to tatters in their "Hummers," so that well-heeled American suburbanites can play in theirs.

For my family and me, the costs of this war are real and not abstract. By day, I fight my demons of dreaded possibility, beat them back into the shadows, into the dark recesses of my mind. Every night, they hiss and whisper a vile prognosis of gloom and desolation. I order the voices into silence, but too often they laugh at and mock my commands.

I wonder if George Bush ever hears these voices.

And I wonder, too…just how much are we willing to pay for a gallon of gas?

PRISCILLA AMMERMAN

Priscilla Ammerman, a long-term Mississippi resident, is a state purchasing agent.

I am the mother of identical 22-year-old twins, both members of the Mississippi Army National Guard. Both have been activated in the same unit for training here in Mississippi and for deployment to Iraq in January.

As luck would have it, my sons' unit also has another set of identical twins; they are only 19. This is one of the real consequences of the mobilization of National Guard units from small towns; we have brothers, sons and fathers, mothers and daughters, and all other combinations of relatives going to combat zones together.

I read Ms. Allison's comments and, finally, was able to identify with someone in this alternate universe I suddenly find myself residing in. I also feel her frustration, her fear, her all-encompassing anxiety and most of all her overriding anger.

Like Ms. Allison, I can no longer seem to communicate at all with my family's members, all of whom are also right-wing, religious, knee-jerk supporters of Bush. When they vaguely ask me how my sons are doing, I just as vaguely reply fine. I really have no one other than my husband to express my feelings to. Living in Mississippi precludes most thoughtful discussion of the war, the President or any other topic relating to this Administration.

My anger at this President has become so intense that I can no longer watch him on television or listen to him on NPR; I literally become physically ill. I recently e-mailed the White House to ask the President to do a little soul-searching late at night away from distraction by advisers, campaign staff, etc. I asked him to then ask himself if he thought this war was worth the sacrifice of his twins, because I sincerely felt that it was not worth the sacrifice of mine.

Needless to say, I got no reply. And since then, as I have read more and more about his personality, I have realized what a futile effort that query was, because it appears this man is seemingly incapable of introspection or self-doubt. He apparently has no comprehension of the suffering of others, either.

As the mother of twins going into combat together, I think I am facing a situation even more untenable than most. Because

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my sons have always been so close, I have to fear not only the loss of a child but the consequences of that loss on the other twin. Both sons have confided to me that their greatest fear is not dying—but coming back without their brother. I, of course, have absolutely no way to reassure either that his greatest fears will not come to fruition.

My husband and I can only pray daily that something can occur before January to keep them here. They are 22-year-old college students who should be studying for finals and going to keggers, not patrolling in a country where the enemy straps on explosives and uses his body as a guided weapon.

MARYELLEN WALTER

Maryellen Walter is an out-of-work telecommunications worker from the Midwest.

Teri Allison's letter put into words many of my own feelings. We are a blue-collar union family whose only two sons are now in Iraq, using the Army to pay for their educations. One son is an armor officer who earned an ROTC scholarship; the other is an enlisted medic who wants to finish his education on the GI Bill. They knew the risks and joined voluntarily. And were they serving in Afghanistan, it would be so much easier for me to bear, because that battle in the WOT [War on Terror] needed to be fought. Iraq is a huge wrong turn that seems to inflame the risk of terror, not diminish it.

We also have a contradiction about Iraq within our family. Our officer son's wife is a huge Bush supporter who views Iraq as the main stage of World War IV, and W. is her White Knight defending our civilization. I envy her the peace of mind that helps her cope with the separation and anxiety. But whistling past the graveyard gives me no such peace. If this is indeed an apocalyptic clash of civilizations, where is the national sense of urgency, why are so relatively few bearing the burden and why are we paying for it on credit?

MIKE ROEMHILDT

Mike Roemhildt, a music teacher, lives in Cloquet, Minnesota.

I just wanted to write to thank you for posting the letter, "The Costs of War." It expressed the feelings of my wife and me in a way that was so close to ours it was scary. Our son, age 19, is a tanker in the Army and has been to Iraq once already and will go back sometime this coming winter. Needless to say, we dread it very much. His first tour found him in an ambush, witnessing many horrible sights, IED explosions and mortar attacks, and finding himself in a position in which he had to kill. He seems to be handling things OK, though he drank for nearly three weeks upon his initial return. There was virtually no psych screening to speak of to identify those soldiers who might have problems. In fact, they were not even held more than a few hours on base before being released into the world!!!

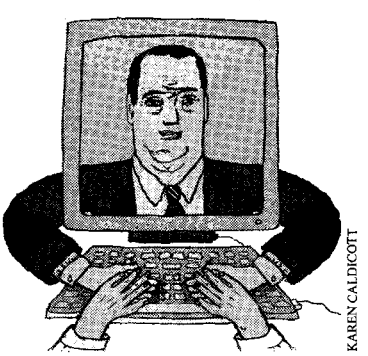
I could certainly go on about my thoughts and feelings but my main purpose for writing was to thank you and to request that you forward this letter on to the author. It meant a lot to my wife and me to read another person's experiences and to discover that we are not alone. ■

THANKS TO WEB-SAVVY AGITATORS, INSIDERISM AND ELITISM ARE UNDER HEAVY ATTACK.

The Rise of Open-Source Politics

MICAH L. SIFRY

Whether you're a Democrat in mourning or a Republican in glee, the results from election day should not obscure an important shift in America's civic life. New tools and practices born on the Internet have reached critical mass, enabling ordinary people to participate in processes that used to be closed to them. It may seem like cold comfort for Kerry supporters now, but the truth is that voters don't have to rely on elected or self-appointed leaders to chart the way forward anymore. The era of top-down politics—where campaigns, institutions and journalism were cloistered communities powered by hard-to-amass capital—is over. Something wilder, more engaging and infinitely more satisfying to individual participants is arising alongside the old order.



KAREN CALDICOTT

One moment when this new power began to be collectively understood by grassroots activists was on April 23, 2003. It was 4:31 PM (EST) in cyberspace when Mathew Gross, then toiling in obscurity on Howard Dean's presidential campaign, posted the following missive on the message board of SmirkingChimp.com, a little-known but heavily trafficked forum for anti-Bush sentiment:

> So I wander back to my desk and there really IS a note on my chair from Joe Trippi, the Campaign Manager for Howard Dean. The note says:

Micah L. Sifry, senior analyst with Public Campaign, is the co-author of Is That a Politician in Your Pocket? *(Wiley). He blogs about the issues in this article at www.personaldemocracy.com, where he is the executive editor.*

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Robert Solomon is the Quincy Lee Centennial Professor of Philosophy at The University of Texas. A recipient of both the Standard Oil Outstanding Teaching Award and the President's Associates Teaching Award, he is the author of more than a dozen books in philosophy and psychology.

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> Matt,
>
> Start an "Ask the Dean Campaign" thread over at the Smirking Chimp.
>
> —Joe
>
> Surely a seminal moment in Presidential politics, no?
>
> So, here's the deal. Use this space to throw questions and comments our way. I'll be checking this thread, Joe will be checking this thread. We're understandably very busy so don't give up if we disappear for a day or two. Talk amongst yourselves while we're out of the room, as it were. But we will check in and try to answer questions. We want to hear from you. We want to know what you think.
>
> So, go to it. And thanks for supporting Howard Dean.

About an hour later, after thirty responses appeared, Zephyr Teachout, Gross's colleague, chimed in with some answers. A little later, a participant on the site wrote: "This is too cool, an actual direct line to the Dean campaign committee! Pinch me—I must be dreaming!" Ultimately, more than 400 people posted comments on Gross's thread. Richard Hoefer, a frequent visitor, later wrote me: "That was an amazing day to see that rise out of nowhere. People were floored that the thread title was 'Ask the Dean Campaign'—and Trippi and Matt were actually asking questions and interacting. Never before had anyone seen that."

Never before had the top-down world of presidential campaigning been opened to a bottom-up, laterally networked community of ordinary voters. The Smirking Chimp is a website with 25,000-plus registered members, founded after the 2000 election as a gathering place for liberals, progressives and leftists who felt the newly selected President reminded them most of, well, a smirking chimp. Each day they devour and critique the handful of critical articles selected by its webmaster, Jeff Tiedrich, a New York–based programmer who started the site on a lark and is amazed by its growth. "The community of the Chimp is the angry, angry, engaged left," Tiedrich says. When it was offered a direct connection to Dean, who was then the only candidate attacking Bush and the war in stark terms, lightning struck.

"The reason these community sites have formed," says Gross, rattling off the names DailyKos, MyDD, Eschaton, Democratic Underground and Buzzflash, along with the Smirking Chimp, "is the Democratic Party is too based on insiders." (Some Republicans apparently feel the same way, and have started similar sites, like RedState.org.) Indeed, at most political organizations, "membership" and "participation" mean little more than writing a check in response to a direct-mail appeal, as Harvard professor Theda Skocpol argues in her 2003 book *Diminished Democracy*. This wasn't always the case, Skocpol notes—through the first half of the 1900s tens of millions of Americans were engaged in cross-class fellowship and civic activism through federated mass membership organizations like the Free Masons, the Knights of Pythias and the American Legion. But, undermined by the Vietnam War, the "rights revolutions" and especially the new mass-media system, mass membership groups atrophied. They were replaced by a proliferating array of professionally run, top-down advocacy organizations, like the AARP and Natural Resources Defense Council. "America is now full of civic entrepreneurs who are constantly looking upward for potential angels, shmoozing with the wealthy," Skocpol writes, rather than talking to people of modest means.

But it is also true that insiderism and elitism have recently come under heavy attack, as everyone from Trent Lott to Dan Rather can attest. And it's not just Congress and big media whose hierarchies are being challenged; nonprofits and interest groups are feeling the ground shift too. "Members Unite! You have nothing to lose but your newsletters and crappy coffee-cup premiums," read the title of a recent post on WorldChanging.com, a blog devoted to fostering this movement. New web-based tools are facilitating a different way of doing politics, one in which we may all actually, not hypothetically, be equals; where transparency and accountability are more than slogans; and where anyone with few resources but a compelling message can be a community organizer, an ad-maker, a reporter, a publisher, a theorist, a money-raiser or a leader.

Consider these harbingers:

§ About two-thirds of American adults use the Internet, and more than 55 percent have access to a high-speed Internet connection at either home or work.

§ More than 53 million people have contributed material online, according to a spring 2003 survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

§ More than 15 million have their own website.

§ A new blog, or online journal, is created every 5.3 seconds, according to Technorati.com, a site that tracks the known universe of these easily updated websites. As of November 1, there were almost 4.3 million blogs, a million more than three months before. More than half of them are regularly updated by their creators, producing more than 400,000 fresh postings every day. (Full disclosure: My brother David is the founder of Technorati.)

§ A well-written blog, Joshua Micah Marshall's Talking Points Memo, gets more than 500,000 monthly visitors—as many as the entire website of *The American Prospect*, the magazine where Marshall used to work, at a fraction of the cost.

§ Of the approximately 400,000–500,000 people who attended a political meeting through the social-networking site Meetup.com this election season, half had never gone to a political meeting before. Sixty percent were under 40.

§ Attendees of Meetups for Democratic Party presidential candidates reported making an average of $312 in political contributions last year.

§ A two-minute political cartoon lampooning both Kerry and Bush, put out by JibJab.com this past summer, had 10 million viewings in the month of July—three times the number of hits on both presidential campaign websites combined—and has since been viewed another 55 million times.

But it isn't the quantity of interactions taking place that suggests the change under way; it is the quality of those conversations. If, as a *New Yorker* cartoon put it, "On the Internet, no one knows if you're a dog," on the Internet, no one likes it if you don't speak in a genuine human voice. Says Christopher Locke, one of the co-authors of *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, a bible of sorts for business people trying to understand how the Internet is changing commerce:

> Compared to this kind of personal, intimate, knowledgeable and highly engaged voice…top-down corporate communications come across as stale and stentorian—the boring, authoritarian voice of command and control. The glaring difference between these styles is the strange attractor that has brought tens of mil-

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lions flocking to the Internet. There's new life passing along the wires. And it hasn't been coming from corporations.

Nor has it been coming from politicians, not until recently.

It's the Network, Stupid

The differences between MoveOn.org, the big, liberal e-mail activist group, and DailyKos.com, the biggest of the new blog-centered sites, are illustrative. MoveOn and its associated PAC give its 2.8 million subscribers lots of easy, timely and mostly well-chosen options to get involved in national affairs. Most people are too busy to get deeply involved in many issues, and thus many respond positively to a request for help if action is one click away. MoveOn's sheer size makes small actions feel larger—maybe you'll do a bake sale for democracy if you know 10,000 other people are doing it too. It has raised millions of dollars for political candidates and advertising, and involved its subscribers in many innovative experiments, like its June 2003 online presidential primary and its "Bush in 30 Seconds" ad contest.

But MoveOn is still very much a top-down organization. Technologist and organizational strategist Tom Mandel says, "MoveOn is to liberal politics as Wal-Mart is to retail." Wes Boyd, Joan Blades, Eli Pariser and the other members of its leadership team may sign all their mass e-mails with their first names, but they set policy for the organization in much the same way as every other nonprofit, by talking among themselves, fielding proposals from various suitors, polling their audience and talking among themselves some more. Periodically they will ask subscribers to offer their ideas about priorities using an "ActionForum" program that enables visitors to suggest an issue, read what others have said and vote on their preferences. But that tool gives MoveOn members little ability to talk to each other directly or to aggregate their ideas independently of the choices its leaders make for them.

By comparison, DailyKos is a multilayered community engineered to reward ideas that bubble up from below. Like many bloggers, Markos Moulitsas, the Gulf War veteran who runs it, requires visitors to register (for free) if they want to post a comment. He also encourages users to set up their own "diaries," or blogs within his blog, where they can post their own entries. Unlike most blogs, the DailyKos is built on a tool called Scoop, which includes peer moderation, where members rank each other's entries and comments. Smart diary postings thus often rise to Moulitsas's attention, and if he reprints them on his main page they gain an even larger audience.

In addition, people with high rankings become "trusted users" who have the ability to recommend that visitors who try to disrupt conversations or simply post right-wing taunts be banned from the site. Only Moulitsas has the power to make that decision, and he weeds his garden carefully. "If somebody posts and I haven't seen them in a while," he told me, "I'll say, 'Where've you been?'" Amazingly, he insists that he has developed personal relationships with hundreds of people. "That's what happens after two years of reading the same names over and over again," he says.

As a result, the Kos community has become a very efficient collaboration engine—not only for pooling money for candidates (at least $600,000 has been given through the site) but also for rapid fact-checking of political statements and news stories, quick dissemination of news of voting irregularities and brainstorming

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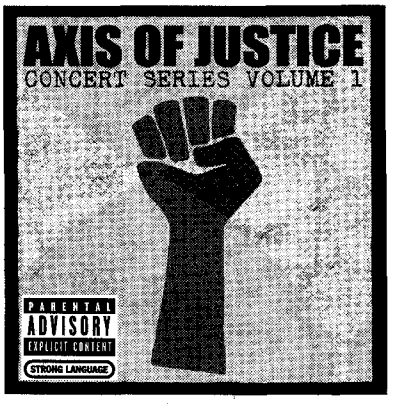

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of campaign themes. During the presidential debates, Kos's daily traffic surged to more than a half million visits. The DailyKos, to be sure, is still an egocentric organization dominated by one person who is not without blemishes, like refusing to disclose who his paying political clients are. But his success shows the power of an open network approach to organizing.

Beyond Kos, blog-based political networking has had all kinds of concrete political effects. Best known is the way prominent bloggers like Joshua Micah Marshall, along with some conservatives like Glenn Reynolds, fired up the Trent Lott-Strom Thurmond story, which led to Lott's fall from grace. More recently, bloggers have spurred the resignation of a homophobic Congressman (Ed Schrock), undermined the credibility of key evidence in Dan Rather's story on Bush's National Guard service, distributed Jon Stewart's blistering October 15 appearance on CNN's *Crossfire*, beat back Sinclair Broadcasting's plan to force its stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary, and formed a back channel for unhappy soldiers in Iraq and their families back home.

The new political technology works because it gives individuals a way to pool their time, attention and resources around causes they may hold in common—and to do it without needing to become a professional activist or wait for approval from any authority figure. "It's not about the technology or the blog," says Mathew Gross now. "It's about having a conversation and treating people with respect."

The New Gold Rush

If conventional politicos had doubts about that proposition after Dean's late-January collapse in the Democratic primaries, their questions were muted a few weeks later, when a $2,000 investment in advertising on a few political blogs generated more than $80,000 two weeks later in small contributions to Democratic Congressional candidate Ben Chandler. Chandler went on to win the special election for the 6th District in Kentucky. Suddenly politicians were adding community-building tools to their websites and buying ads on popular blogs. For firms that specialize in selling Internet plumbing and the expertise needed to run it, like GetActive, Issue Dynamics, CTSG, Groundspring, IStandFor, Right Click Strategies, Kintera and Convio, these are flush times.

In late March an audience of several hundred technologists, venture capitalists and journalists gathered at Esther Dyson's annual PC Forum in Scottsdale, Arizona, a top venue for the computer industry. This year the hot topic was social software. The crowd listened intently as Bob Epstein, a member of GetActive's board of directors, told them that the company's clients—groups like Oxfam America, Earthjustice, Riverkeeper, PBS and the AFL-CIO—were seeing huge jumps in online fundraising. Noting that $70 billion is spent every year on direct mail and "some of that will move online," he reassured the crowd that "our goal isn't to change the political system, it's to get a good return on the dollar."

That seemed to be the main focus, too, at the "Politics Online" conference at George Washington University in April. To most of the audience, which was thick with consultants from both parties, the Internet is just a new place for a more sophisticated kind of direct mail, the kind where each solicitation message can be tailored precisely to a voter's concerns and foibles, and where a dribble of quasi participation ("Become an E-Captain!" "Click Here to E-Mail This Pre-Written Message to Your Member of Congress") can produce a torrent of donations.

It fell to David Weinberger, a co-author of the *Cluetrain Manifesto* and an Internet adviser to the Dean campaign, to try to pierce the marketing talk at the conference with a harder truth. "I am not a 'customer' and I am not a 'consumer,'" he fumed during a panel with representatives of MoveOn.org and RightMarch.com over the issue of how best to manage online campaigns. "I am a citizen and a voter. I flee from 'message.' It is advertising. I want to avoid advertising," he roared. Recalling the hullabaloo over Kerry's comment that the Bush campaigners "are the most crooked, lying group I've ever seen," caught when he thought a mike he was wearing was off, Weinberger insisted that this was the best thing that had happened to Kerry. "That was the first time he had been allowed to speak as a human being." Speaking off-mike, he argued, was like blogging—in both cases people's real voices could be heard, which is what we hunger for. "Control kills scale. Control kills passion. Control kills the human voice," Weinberger insisted.

Loss of Control Freaks

That message has been very slow in reaching the Democratic establishment. On his blog, Weinberger tells of meeting DNC chair Terry McAuliffe at a cocktail party. "I tried to say that the Net can do things for campaigns other than raise money… for example, bring in a portion of the population that is feeling a tad alienated in part because of the relentless money 'n' marketing focus of the campaign. McAuliffe agreed, and then went on to re-express my point in terms of using the Net to raise money." Nor did this message penetrate the Kerry campaign. "They don't take part in the conversation on the Kerry blog," complained Mathew Gross this past summer. "They're still sort of issuing press releases, albeit in a more human voice."

That's because top-down politics is all about maintaining control. "Think of an established brand with a lot invested in control of its image," says Jonah Seiger, founding partner of Connections Media and a veteran of Internet politicking since the late 1980s. "The idea of opening that up is scary."

"Anybody who does politics the old way will fight doing things the new way because it's harder to get paid for it," says Mark Walsh, CEO of Progress Media, the parent of Air America and a veteran of such companies as VerticalNet and America Online. "Look at every other industry and how the Internet has altered it. Take E-Trade and the selling of stocks. Or Orbitz and the travel industry. In every case, the Internet enables getting rid of the middlemen." For about a year, starting in late 2001, Walsh was McAuliffe's chief technology officer, earning $1 a year to help the Democratic Party upgrade its tech systems. "Terry did want to do the right thing," Walsh says, "but I found the same buzz saw—legacy behavior and consultants who are compensated highly for non-cyber-centric behavior. TV, telemarketing, direct mail—that's where the margins are."

Another veteran of early efforts to convince top Democrats to embrace the new technology, who asked not to be named, said "At the DSCC [Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee] the executive director, Jim Jordan, flatly didn't care. He said it

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was in the hands of then–political director Andy Grossman, who said, 'The day someone can show me that the Internet will make a difference in raising money or casting votes, that's the day I will care.'" He said this in 2001—after MoveOn's anti-impeachment campaign, after Jesse Ventura's breakthrough use of the Internet in 1998, after John McCain and Bill Bradley raised millions online in the 2000 primaries.

"The disconnect is now gone," says my source, noting that top Democratic Party staff are all embracing new web-based tools, "but the willingness to acknowledge that change must happen to accompany that is not. The Internet has to become the center of the organization. But the notion of the party's committees having well-defined departments with a top-down hierarchical structure hasn't changed." Walsh adds, "We have to go through a generational purge. People have been fed crap—the McPolitics diet—for so long, the body politic will respond slowly to new tools that will make them smarter and more powerful." Thus one big question for the coming year will be the extent to which grassroots activists, small donors and bloggers decide to raise hard questions about the functioning of the party organs and interest groups that until now have been able to act on their behalf without having to pay a price for their mistakes. The Kerry debacle is a good place to start.

Open-source politics is still a long way off. The term "open source" specifically refers to allowing any software developer to see the underlying source code of a program, so that anyone can analyze it and improve it; better code trumps bad code, and programmers who have proven their smarts have greater credibility and status. Applied to political organizing, open source would mean opening up participation in planning and implementation to the community, letting competing actors evaluate the value of your plans and actions, being able to shift resources away from bad plans and bad planners and toward better ones, and expecting more of participants in return. It would mean moving away from egocentric organizations and toward network-centric organizing.

The Emerging Internet Majority

To the visionary technologists building the new civic software, we are living in nothing short of a paradigm shift. Scott Heiferman, the scrawny, youthful CEO of Meetup.com, enjoys citing Alexis de Tocqueville along with Robert Putnam, and argues, "In the same way that TV took politics away from the grassroots, the Internet will give it back." He predicts a return to the 1800s/early-1900s era of joiners and organizers, when a double-digit level of civic participation in community affairs was common. Steven Johnson, the author of *Emergence*, recently wrote:

> Using open-source coding as a model, it's not a stretch to believe the same process could make politics more representative and fair. Imagine, for example, how a grassroots network could take over some of the duties normally performed by high-priced consultants who try to shape a campaign message that's appealing. If the people receiving the message create it, chances are it's much more likely to stir up passions.

Joi Ito, a Japanese venture capitalist and social entrepreneur, predicts that the web will become more self-organizing and that a new form of "emergent democracy" will evolve that will be

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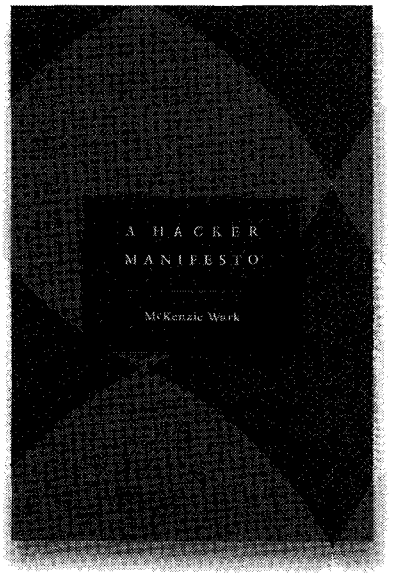

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-Hua Hsu, VILLAGE VOICE

"Takes us deep into the philosophy of hacking and gives us a new way of seeing those irreverent folks who play for keeps with digital culture."
—Paul D. Miller a.k.a.
DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid

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more supple and transparent than traditional forms of representative democracy.

There's no question that public discourse is being radically changed. As Dan Gillmor, a technology columnist for the *San Jose Mercury News*, writes in his terrific new book, *We the Media*, "If someone knows something in one place, everyone who cares about that something will know it soon enough." But it's also possible that new Internet-based tools will merely give already advantaged groups greater voice, reinforcing existing inequalities. "I think there are still a lot of Americans who think that no one is listening to them," says Theda Skocpol. She argues that web-enabled politicking may just be "really well suited to the liberal side of the spectrum, where you have a lot of college-educated people who are not connecting to politics through church networks or their workplaces or professional associations, where open partisanship is frowned upon, and where the Democratic Party has fallen into dealing with people as disaggregated individuals, followers or clients, rather than participants."

Indeed, a Bentley College survey of attendees at Meetups for the Democratic presidential candidates and party found they were mostly white middle- and upper-income professionals. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project's most recent survey, Hispanics have closed the gap with whites, with two-thirds of both groups going online, but Internet usage among blacks lags by about 18 percent. Age is the other obvious predictor of online behavior, with just under one-quarter of people over 65 venturing online. Yet another factor also affects Internet participation: time. "Who is it that spends time online?" asks Mathew Gross. "It's people at home or at desk jobs where they can surf the web. You don't have that kind of time or freedom if you're a dental hygienist or migrant worker," he notes.

Skocpol argues that the Internet is not changing the class structure of mobilization, because it is all driven by "intentional politics." You have to know in advance that you're looking for political information or to join a conversation or make a donation before you search on the web, she says. In the past, when federated, mass-membership organizations enlivened civic life, "People didn't have to know in advance that they wanted to be involved," she notes. She has a point: While the web may make it easier for a compelling message to circulate through existing social networks, it doesn't alter our tendency to cluster by social group. At the same time, people who rely on the net for political information are actually more likely than non–net users to seek out views different from their own, according to a new Pew Internet study.

These are likely to be momentary bumps in a much larger wave. That's because the next generation is growing up online, rather than adapting to it in their mid-adult years. More than 2 million children aged 6–17 have their own website, according to a December 2003 survey by Grunwald Associates. Twenty-nine percent of kids in grades K–3 have their own e-mail address. Social networking sites like Friendster and Flickr (a photo-sharing site) are drawing millions of participants and fostering new kinds of social conversations, some of which are already political.

Josh Koenig, one of the twenty-somethings who cut their teeth at the Dean campaign and a co-founder of Music for America, says, "We're only seeing the first drips of what is going to be a downpour." When he told me that in most high schools in America, students are using the web to rank their teachers, I thought that was a bit of hyperbole. But then I discovered RateMyTeachers.com, where more than 6 million ratings have been posted by students on more than 900,000 teachers at more than 40,000 American and Canadian middle and high schools. That's triple the number from one year ago, covering about 85 percent of all the schools in both countries.

Just imagine when they take that habit into their adult lives, and start rating other authority figures, like politicians and bosses. The future is in their hands, though the rest of us will be taken along for the ride. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
suggestion differently, as I reported.

The real source of dispute here is not the facts but how we view them from the perspectives of our dramatically different cultures. Dr. Samar seems to think I'm criticizing her for not exacting a bride price. Afghans might well think she undervalued them, but from the Western point of view, selling girls is scarcely an improvement on giving them away. This misunderstanding underscores my point: that the gulf between the Western concept of women's rights and the "horrendous" reality of Afghan patriarchal culture is far wider than the Bush Administration—boasting of "liberation" and "democracy"—pretends. And that when international aid agencies try to operate "within the limits of Afghanistan," as Dr. Samar believes her Afghan organization must, things can and do go badly wrong. Afghanistan is not Germany, as she rightly says, but neither can Germany, or America, settle for being Afghanistan. How to bridge this gap, in the interests of Afghan women, is the question. ANN JONES

OUR NUKES—A TERRORIST'S DREAM

Durham, NC

■ Micah L. Sifry and Nancy Watzman's excellent article on chemical plant insecurity, "Security for Sale" [Oct. 4], refers to "tough federal security requirements" at nuclear power plants. Sadly, nuclear plants are lightly defended from potential attacks. Industry's claims regarding the toughness of reactor buildings are a long-discredited distraction from attention to the largest and most vulnerable targets: Cooling pools packed with highly irradiated reactor fuel are inside buildings much weaker than reactor containments and are vulnerable to attacks from the air and by intruders on foot.

Federal and independent researchers conclude that a strike against waste pools—or accidental loss of water—could lead to a fire causing thousands of fatalities and contaminating thousands of square miles with gamma radiation. This is no secret to foreign or homegrown terrorists.

The pro-industry Nuclear Regulatory Commission's negligence in correcting this severe gap in national security has exasperated scientists and a growing coalition of citizen groups. In late 2002, twenty-seven state attorneys general warned that "the potential threat to nuclear plants is very real," and they urged Congress to enhance protections for spent-fuel pools. This fall, the National Academy of Sciences echoed that warning. Nuclear plants will store "spent" fuel for decades—at least. Cooling pools now overcrowded with this deadly waste must be thinned out, with all older waste moved into hardened, dispersed dry storage—as used in Germany. Though not a permanent solution, this would create a powerful deterrent against attack and protect against accidents.

JIM WARREN, *North Carolina Waste Awareness & Reduction Network*

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(Continued From Page 8)
Schröder and France's Jacques Chirac will not now have to figure out how to say no to Kerry when he asks for help in Iraq. Tony Blair will not be the last of the Iraq triumvirate in power, and seems to imagine that he can cash in his chips with the White House to restart the Middle East peace process. There are signs that, having paid his dues in Washington, he may try to mend fences in Europe: Britain is already in talks with France, Germany and Iran about Iran's nuclear program and will probably side with Europe against the United States on a French push to lift an EU arms embargo against China. But Europe itself is riven with disagreements on everything from finance to foreign policy, and those who hope to use Bush's election as a catalyst for unity will have their work cut out for them.

From here, the most frightening thing about Bush's victory is the prospect of a world divided between warring fundamentalisms, with Europe in the middle struggling to hold on to its Enlightenment legacy. On the day after the US election the second-biggest story in several European newspapers was the murder in Amsterdam of Theo van Gogh, a deliberately provocative filmmaker whose latest work dramatized the abuse of a Muslim woman. The film was scripted by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali refugee who has become a right-wing, anti-immigrant MP; van Gogh's killer was a young man with dual Dutch and Moroccan nationality. The messianic clash-of-civilizations rhetoric coming from the White House only sharpens tensions like these. On the morning after the election, Sir Christopher Meyer, former British Ambassador to Washington, spoke with undiplomatic plainness on the BBC: "If I was Osama bin Laden, which fortunately I'm not, I would be wanting at this moment to help Bush." MARIA MARGARONIS

Maria Margaronis writes from The Nation*'s London bureau.*

The Party's Over

Cleveland

Tracy Pierce didn't get to vote. She'd been registered for years but had moved and didn't know that this affected her voting status. She wasn't on any voter list that could be found. An election monitor told her to go to another precinct and ask for a provisional ballot. Another voting adviser told her that, not having voted for a few years and not being in the Board of Elections database, she would likely cast a ballot that would eventually be thrown out. So she went home.

In the excitement over election protection in Ohio and the country, Tracy's is the kind of story that might be seized on as an example of the ways democracy is hobbled. For a time, Ohio's provisional ballots were imagined as "the hanging chads of 2004"—the thing that might swing the election one way or the other—and voting rights, or efforts to suppress them, were made a belated top issue. Outside every polling place in metropolitan Cleveland's black and Latino districts, clusters of people stood in the rain all day wearing black-and-white Election Protection vests, or bright yellow NAACP Voter Protection jackets, or white nylon Democratic Party Voting Rights Team jackets. They were there to inform or intervene or, by their numbers, intimidate would-be intimidators, *aka* "challengers," whom the Republican Party had announced would be stationed in the polls to demand proof of age, citizenship or residency of voters who appeared suspicious. In the end, the Republican challengers never showed up, at least not in the ways that had been expected in the most heightened fear-forecasts. The early story of the day, as international observers here expressed it, was that civil society had scored a victory over the scandalous grab bag of American elections laws and judicial interpretations and their manipulation by powerful partisan interests.

There were the usual issues at the polls in Ohio, though nothing dramatically systemic, but Tracy Pierce represents something deeper than those. She was disappointed about not voting for what it symbolized. "What will my children think?" she wondered. But as we talked about the candidates, the expectations she had as a black mother in the country's poorest city and the role of politics in her life, she confided, "To be honest, I don't think much of Kerry. I just don't trust that politicians will ever do what they promise...it's like they expect us to be zombies," listen to their promises, believing them long enough to be hooked at election time and then forgetting. Meanwhile, life declines. Driving between polling places on Cleveland's East Side provided a quick refresher on the devastating realities the long campaign never did address. "Maybe I don't feel so bad that I didn't get to vote, thinking about it now," Tracy said finally.

No "civil society" regularly engages the Tracy Pierces, no organized black power, or people power or civil liberties power; and, most significant for November 2, no Democratic Party power. The only real grassroots operation in Ohio in this election for the Democrats—the one that began sixteen months ago and involved disciplined cadres of people talking with their neighbors, coworkers, friends and relatives in an impressively coordinated fashion—was put together by organized labor. Tracy, working two part-time jobs, doesn't belong to a union; and unions are losing members as jobs slide away.

However many people were mobilized to get out the vote by myriad 527s, those late efforts weren't a match for a Republican Party that had committees in every county in Ohio and the country, part of a grassroots network that has been scrupulously built for twenty-five years and that, here and elsewhere, motivated its fundamentalist Christian base the way it has all along, with the help of antigay initiatives that institutionalize bigotry. As one local activist told me while watching returns in the early morning hours, "There is no state Democratic Party to speak of here—not in terms of infrastructure" or political clarity (no one but gays wanted to talk to voters about Ohio's sweeping antigay initiative as an organizing tactic of the right). One hears the same across the country. Voter protection, Internet fundraising and hurry-up mobilizations are no match for party organization and ideology.

The night before the election John Kerry held his last big rally here, with Bruce Springsteen. Johnny Randle, an antiwar Vietnam vet and retired maitre d' who worked the polls in his inner-city neighborhood, told me he thought the event was "electric." Earlier that day a young union organizer had been exclaiming in similar terms about Eminem's video "Mosh." Remembering that young brother later, while listening to "Promised Land," "Thunder Road" and "No Surrender" vibrate in the night air, I thought how odd it

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COMMENT

was that songs that defined alienation for two generations might now be imagined as anthems of a new dawn. They might yet be, but not fronting a husk of a party whose only real energy this election came from outside itself. JoAnn Wypijewski

JoAnn Wypijewski is a former Nation *senior editor.*

Busted in Vegas

Las Vegas

"I feel dazed and stunned," said Margot, a 25-year-old UCLA law student as she stared at the TV showing John Kerry slipping 136,000 votes behind George W. Bush in the crucial Ohio tally and nearly 4 million nationally. "I know this is a great loss, but I'm numb. Like it hasn't fully hit me yet."

Her words pretty much summed up the postelection scene on the second floor of the aptly named Ice House Lounge. Hundreds of volunteer canvassers who had poured into Nevada for a final ground campaign to defeat Bush were now gathered to help one another adjust to a bitter reality—another four-year term for the incumbent.

Election day in Las Vegas had started much better than it was ending. More than 1,000 volunteers mustered at 7 AM in a hangar-sized tent near downtown and were methodically equipped with two-way radios, Palm Pilots, precinct maps and voter lists. They were one division in the small army assembled by pro-Democratic 527 groups and coordinated by America Coming Together (ACT). Their spirits were soaring. "We're hitting 45,000 doors today with 143 teams of seven people each," said a hopeful Mike Garcia, president of the Los Angeles–based Local 1877 of the Service Employees International Union, home of the legendary Justice for Janitors movement. "In twenty-three years of political activity, I have never seen anything like this sort of intensity."

That palpable intensity built among the canvassing teams as exit polls filtered out around noon showing not only a national pro-Kerry wave but also Nevada coming into reach of the Democrats. Kerry, indeed, took a lead in the early evening returns. But as his numbers turned south nationally, he eventually lost the Silver State as well.

Disappointment hit hard. "People voted for Bush because of fear of change, because he has more Christian values," concluded 24-year-old healthcare union organizer René Sebeny. A former Howard Dean supporter, she now figures that he too would have been defeated. "Now I think in this political environment only a candidate who is more center-right has a chance of winning."

Some among the volunteers were still hoping against hope that Kerry could pull out a victory after the provisional ballots were counted in Ohio. "I give Kerry no more than a 1 out of 10 chance on that front," said another young ACT volunteer, an aide to a liberal Los Angeles city councilman. "I say let loose the ninja lawyers. Unleash them on Ohio."

Others seemed consumed by pain. "This proves the ignorance of the American people," said one writer volunteer. "I don't think it's any more complicated than that."

A number of the activists, by contrast, expressed scant surprise. "From the beginning I thought Dean was much more of a straight talker than Kerry," said 26-year-old Ari Yampolsky, a Bay Area researcher for SEIU. "What was it with John Kerry anyway? He was this moribund sort of candidate who was given a presidential gravitas. But he was never inspiring."

"Tell you the truth, I'm amazed anyone votes Democrat at all," joked Todd Jones, a young philosophy professor at the University of Nevada who had spent recent weeks canvassing for ACT and who was taking the evening's defeat as a symptom of a national mood. "I mean, the Republicans want to lower your taxes and tell you what to do. We want to raise your taxes and let you be free. Why would you vote for us?"

Many wondered where all the energy, all that intensity, which first surfaced in the Dean campaign and had been transferred to ACT, would go, if anywhere. "ACT has its shit together better than anyone," said the councilman's aide. "And who was ACT? It was about one-half Deaniacs. And one-half union people. Well, you have to figure that about half that Deaniac faction will get discouraged, disheartened and will drop out or drift away. The rest of the Deaniacs will remain active. And the union people are going to keep doing what they always do. That's not so bad. We come out of this with a bigger activist base than we had, say, a year ago."

The evening's grim results did offer one opportunity. "Obviously, we need a re-evaluation of everything we've been doing," said a 35-year-old union lobbyist and consultant who had spent the last week as an ACT field coordinator. "We've invested four years of blood, sweat and tears—and tens of millions of dollars to boot. And we still don't know how to win the hearts and minds of the American people."

"We obviously have a lot of serious work and serious soul-searching to do," he added. "But for the time being we have a much more practical question to answer. Just who is the new leader of the Democratic Party? Hillary Clinton or John Edwards?"

His question remained as frozen in the pre-dawn darkness as the electoral vote tally. The ACT volunteers continued to huddle and drink and console one another in the retro lounge, blending seamlessly into a city full of hard-luck losers. Marc Cooper

Marc Cooper is a Nation *contributing editor.*

NATION NOTES

Welcome to Jody Rosen, the magazine's new music critic. Jody, whose article on Björk and Tom Waits appeared in the November 8 issue, has written for the *New York Times*, *Slate*, *Salon* and other publications. He is the author of *White Christmas: The Story of an American Song*. And many thanks to Gene Santoro, who is stepping down from the music critic's post after seventeen years. The author of an acclaimed biography of Charles Mingus, *Myself When I Am Real*, and of several collections of essays, many of which first appeared in these pages, Gene has made a distinctive and lasting contribution to *The Nation*.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Counter-Life

JAMES WOLCOTT

THE PLOT AGAINST AMERICA.
By Philip Roth.
Houghton Mifflin. 391 pp. $26.

Philip Roth is a miracle of modern medicine. Physically, he's been falling apart since the 1960s, when he collapsed at the publication party for William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* and was sped into surgery for appendicitis, only to have doctors discover his stomach drowning in pus. "They stick tubes into him from top to bottom and for days he wallows in delirium," Albert Goldman recorded in his 1969 *Life* profile of Roth. "As he learned later, by the time they cut into him he was just two hours' walk from the grave—a shocking realization that flooded him with an awed feeling of pride and elation. He had wrestled the Malekhamoves—the angel of death—to a fall." But Malekhamoves kept coming back for more, and in the 1980s and '90s Roth took punches to the system—a nervous breakdown, an addiction to painkillers following a failed knee operation, bouts of depression, acute back pain, quintuple bypass surgery—that would have sent most men to the scrapheap. But Roth has proven as indestructible as Keith Richards, and less woozy. His writing betrays no signs of dotage, fatigue or midnight staggers; his brain still hums like a power plant; his raptor gaze remains as keen as ever. Roth's productivity over the past ten years has been phenomenal and shaming. Novel after novel fired like a series of torpedoes—*Sabbath's Theater*, *American Pastoral* (which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1997), *I Married a Communist*, *The Human Stain*, *The Dying Animal* and, now, *The Plot Against America*.

How has he been able to keep up this industrial output? By ruthlessly paring everything superfluous from his life, maintaining a pristine regimen in his own private Yaddo. For a *New Yorker* profile published in 2000, David Remnick made a pilgrimage to Roth's hideaway in rural Connecticut, a two-story clapboard house where the elusive prey lives alone, sets his own schedule and writes in a monkish cell of a studio without even a parakeet to distract him. The Cone of Silence descends and the hourless workday begins. "He stays out here all day and into the evening; no telephone, no fax. Nothing gets in." And yet, as I'm sure Remnick would agree, somehow everything does. Opting out, Roth has never been more plugged in. Unlike other writers who have thrown in their lot with the squirrels and berries, Roth hasn't gone spiritual-naturalist or solipsistic up there in Sleepy Hollow. Chosen isolation has paradoxically softened the armored egotism of much of his earlier work, fully liberating a social panoramist with Proustian recall. It's as if Roth U-Hauled the twentieth century with him up to the monastery, trying to make sense of it in light of contemporary madness.

Although he's been falling apart physically since the '60s, Roth has proved as indestructible as Keith Richards, and less woozy.

Set in the 1940s, *The Plot Against America* is nevertheless pure now, the sword-flash ferocity of *Sabbath's Theater*, *I Married a Communist* and *The Human Stain* subsiding into deep foreboding, the taunting jack-o'-lantern grin of George W. Bush haunting the back of the mind as one consumes the pages. A cautionary tale about how easily the country could slide into fascism, slipping into it until the black waters bury our heads, the novel doesn't seem so much intricately plotted (though it is—at the end, too much so) as anxiously daydreamed into being. "Fear presides over these memories, a perpetual fear," strikes the opening chord of Roth's fictional childhood memoir, and in exhuming those memories *The Plot Against America* opens its own branch of *The Twilight Zone*, where everything

James Wolcott is a columnist for Vanity Fair *and the author, most recently, of* Attack Poodles and Other Media Mutants: The Looting of the News in a Time of Terror *(Miramax).*

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seems familiar and humdrum on the surface, yet disquietingly off; the everyday normal has begun to warp. Even members of your own family cast a Gothic shadow.

1940. Like characters in a Neil Simon nostalgia play, Roth's autobiographical troupe—father, mother, older brother Sandy, cousin Alvin and young Phil—seem posed front and center against a slide-show backdrop of Americana. Fourth of July fireworks. Thanksgiving turkey. March of Dimes drives. The Pledge of Allegiance recited like a prayer. The Roths and their fellow Jews in Weequahic, New Jersey, feel safe and at home in their adopted land, their lives woven into the fabric of the flag, with the expectation of better days ahead after the long climb out of the Great Depression. "Then the Republicans nominated Lindbergh and everything changed." Charles Lindbergh, whose solo flight in the Spirit of St. Louis across the Atlantic to Paris in 1927 thrilled the world, becomes the surprise choice of the Republican Party to oppose the re-election of FDR. It isn't just his impressive lack of political experience—always an asset in this country—that makes him such an imposing challenger. For Lindbergh is more than a storybook hero, an American eagle in aviator goggles; he's a *tragic* hero, sanctified through suffering—invisibly scarred. The kidnapping-murder of the Lindbergh child imbued the father "with a pathos that transformed him into a martyred titan comparable to Lincoln." Fleeing a madhouse America, the grieving family decamps to England, where Lindbergh hops over to Nazi Germany to sample the hospitality of Air Marshal Göring, who honors him with a gold cross adorned with four swastikas. Such hobnobbing understandably unnerves most American Jews, and Lindbergh's testimonial to Hitler as "a great man" doesn't help.

But to most folks "Lucky Lindy" is a savior from above, piloting solo to and from campaign stops like Superman on his appointed rounds. (The descriptions of Lindbergh's sky-visitations recall Hitler's descent into Berlin in the visual overture to Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*.) Unlike most office-seekers, Lindbergh doesn't gasbag and gladhand. He's a laconic plank of Rugged Individualism, a Gary Cooperish man of few words upon whom hopes and subtle graces are projected. Surely no one who so looks the role of hero could do harm. He presents himself as a father-protector, a knightly shield between us and Them. A staunch isolationist, Lindbergh promises to forge an understanding with Nazi Germany to prevent the United States from being sucked into another ghastly war in Europe, sparing America untold carnage. The price of neutrality is giving Nazi Germany a green light to gobble whatever it can of the free world and unleash the mother of all pogroms.

Practically a separate character in *The Plot Against America*, an honorary member of the household, is the radio that anchors the living room. A master mimic, Roth has been entranced by the radio since baby teeth. In Albert Goldman's profile of him, "radio" is the open-sesame word that unlocks his impressionist id, which gets him riffing the voices from *The Jack Benny Show*—"smoothie Jack, fruity Dennis"—and goofing about a Jewish version of Jean Genet's *The Balcony* called *The Terrace*, about a brothel catering to nice Jewish boys that sprinkles their tushies before dressing them for dreamland in their Dr. Dentons. "Tucked into your bed, you fall asleep blissfully listening to a little radio with an orange dial. 'Wake up, dear, it's time to get up.' For that, Philip says, he'd gladly pay $50 a night." In *The Plot Against America*, the radio doesn't doodle away the cares of the day with the light jousting of Jack Benny and Fred Allen. It delivers a nightly diet of bad news for Jews. Families gather around the set to listen to the latest bulletins and take turns tearing out their hair. Lindbergh's acceptance speech at the Republican convention drives the Roths out of the house and into the night to vent with the neighbors.

> Entire families known to me previously only fully dressed in daytime clothing were wearing pajamas and nightdresses under their bathrobes and milling around in their slippers at dawn as if driven from their homes by an earthquake. But what shocked a child most was the anger, the anger of men whom I knew as lightheartened kibbitzers or silent, dutiful breadwinners who all day long unclogged drainpipes or serviced furnaces or sold apples by the pound and then in the evening looked at the paper and listened to the radio and fell asleep in the living room chair, plain people who happened to be Jews now storming about the street and cursing with no concern for propriety, abruptly thrust back into the miserable struggle from which they had believed their families extricated by the providential migration of the generation before.

One of the achievements of *The Plot Against America* is showing how fear slowly infects the very weather of one's life, tightening each swallow of breath. The Family Roth and their neighbors ricochet from fearing the worst to telling themselves maybe-it-won't-be-so-bad to realizing that their first dire instincts were right and maybe it's time to prepare a getaway. "The fear was everywhere, the *look* was everywhere, in the eyes of our protectors especially, the look that comes in the split second after you have locked the door and realize you don't have the key. We had never before observed the adults all helplessly thinking the same thoughts...devastated by the speed with which everything dreadful was happening." Seeing their parents afraid makes the children doubly afraid. Phil, a stamp collector, wakes up howling after dreaming that the stamps for every national monument in his collection have been defiled with a swastika—from the Grand Canyon to the Great Smoky Mountains, nature itself has been Nazified.

American Jewry's chief morale officer in those ominous days—the one crackling voice that keeps them from forming a refugee line from here to Canada—is gossip columnist and radio personality Walter Winchell, who leans into the microphone and guns his motor as if he had a fire to catch. "America's best-known Jew after Albert Einstein," Winchell isn't cowed or conned by this cardboard messiah. He has Lindbergh's anti-Semitic number and will perforate this phony full of whistling holes with the staccato put-downs that are his Western Union trademark. Thinks the young Phil, "Walter Winchell had only to disclose Lindbergh's 'pro-Nazi philosophy' to his thirty million Sunday-evening listeners and to call Lindbergh's presidential candidacy the greatest threat ever to American democracy for all the Jewish families on blocklong little Summit Avenue to resemble once again Americans enjoying the vitality and high spirits of a secure, free, protected citizenry instead of casting themselves about outdoors in their nightclothes like inmates escaped from a lunatic asylum."

Not every Jew bugs out at the prospect of President Lindbergh. The influential Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf of B'nai Moshe, the first of Newark's Conservative temples, greets Lindbergh's candidacy with petaled words of assurance to his followers. Fear him not, Bengelsdorf says. Put away your parochial concerns, and don't be such a peasant. Lindbergh only wants what's best for America, and what's best for America is what's best for the Jews. "I want Charles Lindbergh to be my president not in spite of my being a Jew but because I am a Jew—an *American* Jew." Smoothly buttered with social grace, Rabbi Bengelsdorf is Roth's deadeye portrayal of a proto-neoconservative, an early-model Ravelstein who purrs at the mention of his cozy politi-

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cal connections and perfumes the air with his all-around erudition ("My uncle Monty liked to say of him, 'The pompous son of a bitch knows everything—too bad he doesn't know anything else'"). This pillar of wisdom testifies to Lindbergh's noble intentions at a Madison Square Garden rally as the Roth family take turns tearing out their hair. What the hell does he think he's doing? cries Roth's father. "'Koshering Lindbergh,' Alvin said. 'Koshering Lindbergh for the goyim.'" Giving them permission to vote for an anti-Semite.

It is the vulgar, untutored, hot-pastrami Winchell and shrewd cousin Alvin who have the better bead on the unfolding disaster than the courtly Jews conning themselves that it can't happen here. Rabbi Bengelsdorf is only the most conspicuous prow ornament of a Jewish upper crust so prim, snobbish and complacent that it disdains any rumblings from below as bad manners, poor form. Raised voices offend their notions of civic decorum. After Winchell is axed by his radio sponsor, Jergens Lotion, for lacing into President Lindbergh, the *New York Times*—"a paper founded and owned by Jews," whose editorial policy opposes Lindbergh's appeasement of Hitler—commends this act of corporate and journalistic hygiene. Free speech entails responsibility, and this rabble-rouser went too far. "With accusations so far-fetched that even a lifelong Democrat may find himself feeling unexpected sympathy for the president, Winchell has disgraced himself irredeemably. Jergens Lotion is to be commended for the speed with which it has removed him from the airwaves." (How accurately Roth renders the editorial drone of the *Times*, its Olympian snore.)

To reassure themselves that they still live in the America of their civics books, the Roths take a sightseeing trip to Washington to pay homage to the Founding Fathers. "One reason my parents decided to keep to our long-laid plans to visit Washington was to convince Sandy and me—whether or not they themselves believed it—that nothing had changed other than that FDR was no longer in office." They stand in awe at the Lincoln Memorial, an epiphany moment, "the raised statue of Lincoln in his capacious throne of thrones, the sculpted face looking to me like the most hallowed possible amalgamation—the face of God and the face of America all in one.... What ordinarily passed for great just paled away..."

The afterglow is soon wiped off their faces as Roth's father is labeled—like Winchell—a "loudmouth Jew" for sounding off against President Lindbergh and learns, as does the entire brood, that Lincoln's breadth

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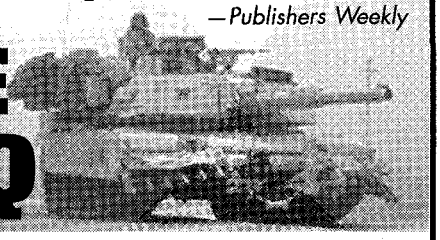

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of spirit no longer blesses the land, which is turning to quicksand beneath them. Institutions that seemed so solid and permanent—the Congress, the Supreme Court, a free press—depend on the willingness of men and women to honor the Constitution and the laws of the land. Once those ideals are no longer honored, once checks and balances are swept off the table with a swing of the arm, nothing stands between citizens and the state. The Kafka machinery in motion, American Jews have their liberties amputated bit by bit, forcibly assimilated by the Office of American Absorption as children are wrested from their parents and dispersed into the heartland, where they can learn how to milk elk. One unfortunate packed off to the boonies is Phil's schoolmate Seldon, the novel's designated schnook upon whom every misfortune befalls. Seldon's father is terminally ill, his death rattle reverberating through the house: "[He] coughed so frequently and with so much force that there seemed to be not one father but four, five, six fathers in there coughing themselves to death." After his father dies and Seldon is shipped off to Kentucky, his mother meets her own tragic end while the unsuspecting kid yammers over the phone about Fig Newtons and chess and having no friends to invite to his birthday party. Nudged across the page with tender exasperation, Seldon is everything a typical Roth character isn't—guileless, slow on the uptake, trusting; a kick-me patsy who is memorialized in the final paragraph as the orphan victim "shattered by the malicious indignities of Lindbergh's America."

It's the phrase "malicious indignities" that arrows to the heart of our heartless time, flash-forwards to the string of shabby degradations that affront us daily, when Vietnam War veteran Max Cleland can be mocked for the loss of his limbs, Christopher Reeve disparaged in death for championing stem-cell research, hostage Kenneth Bigley criticized by conservatives for the "ignoble and unmanly" pleas that his life be spared, 9/11 widows maligned as publicity junkies, George Soros slandered by the editorial-page editor of the *Washington Times* as "a Jew who figured out a way to survive the Holocaust" and Michelle Malkin given generous airtime to defend the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II and propose new camps for suspicious Muslims—it just never stops. Apart from a funny-rueful exchange that finds Phil wondering aloud, What about the Democrats, can't they do something?, to which his father replies, "Son, don't ask me about the Democrats. I'm angry enough as it is," Roth doesn't make overexplicit the parallels between America's fall to fascism under Lindbergh and Bush's fear-based presidency. He doesn't need to. The parallels are so richly implicit, they vibrate like harp strings, dissolving the distance between then and now, fact and fiction.

Some reject the parallels. Bill Kauffman in *The American Conservative* condemns Roth for dragging Lindbergh and the case for isolationism through the muck, calling *The Plot Against America* "the sort of novel a bootlicking author might write to curry favor with a totalitarian government." Benjamin Anastas in *Bookforum* more temperately chastises Roth for not recognizing the real plot against America, "one with targets and objectives we know all too well," hatched by terrorists abroad, not fascists within. And Stanley Crouch diagnoses Roth on *Salon* as afflicted with historical Alzheimer's for deliberately ignoring the racism against black Americans during the 1940s. "How could this book pass everyone at Roth's publisher without the unmentioned smell of burning flesh filling room after room until someone raised a question about the stench for which the novel had cut off its nose in order to avoid acknowledging?" Philip Roth, he gives, and gives, and gives, writing himself to the bone, and this

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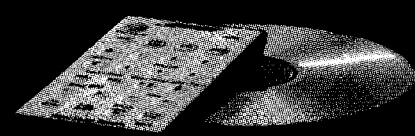

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is the thanks he gets—aggravation! He doesn't even get nominated for a National Book Award! But the ravenous sales of *The Plot Against America* (rare for a work of literary fiction) may signal that an inflection point in the political mood has been reached, a desire to face the fear of the past four years without flinching. "Fear is an instructor of great sagacity and the herald of all revolutions," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. "One thing he teaches, that there is rottenness where he appears. He is a carrion crow, and though you see not well what he hovers for, there is death somewhere. That obscene bird is not there for nothing. He indicates great wrongs which must be revised." And malicious indignities which must be redressed. ■

With Friends Like These

STEVE EARLY

AN UNLIKELY CONSERVATIVE: The Transformation of an Ex-Liberal (Or How I Became the Most Hated Hispanic in America). By Linda Chavez. Basic. 262 pp. Paper $15.

BETRAYAL: How Union Bosses Shake Down Their Members and Corrupt American Politics. By Linda Chavez and Daniel Gray. Crown. 277 pp. $25.95.

Unlike communism and socialism, trade unionism has rarely inspired published "second thoughts" by embittered apostates. Those who turn against labor may be no less disillusioned than members of the "god that failed" generation or even our own indefatigable New Left defector, David Horowitz. But few ex-officials of an AFL-CIO affiliate end up penning renunciations over at the National Right to Work Committee. More typically, union turncoats just go to work for management and keep their mouths shut about it. Linda Chavez—a former labor editor and top assistant to Albert Shanker, late president of the American Federation of Teachers—is a rare exception to the rule.

Chavez parlayed her nine-year stint as an AFT staffer into a career as a syndicated columnist, Fox News commentator and radio talk-show host, after transitioning directly from Shanker's "inner circle to the upper reaches of the Reagan Administration." There, her first job was to muzzle the US Civil Rights Commission, as its controversial staff director. Later, she served as White House liaison to various constituent groups then being courted by Reagan. In 1986 she ran against Barbara Mikulski for a US Senate seat from Maryland, campaigning as a right-wing Republican and getting 39 percent of the vote. Her 2001 bid to become George Bush's first Labor Secretary also ended in defeat. After Chavez neglected to disclose to the Bush transition team that she had actually done a good deed in her life—harboring an undocumented worker from Guatemala—her nomination flamed out amid media controversy over whether she had illegally employed her houseguest.

Being battered by the Washington press corps and then dropped like a hot potato by the Bush crowd was hard enough for Chavez to swallow. It has been equally galling that the opportunity to harass her former union colleagues from a high-profile perch went instead to a more privileged female, from a different ethnic minority. Elaine Chao's elevation to Labor Secretary, as the President's second choice, was aided by her marriage to a prominent Republican senator. Chavez, in contrast, had to win Bush's initial favor through her own boot-strapping efforts in the fight against affirmative action and the minimum wage. The author's simmering resentment and desire for revenge have boiled over into two related books. One is a political memoir and the other a lurid account of labor's allegedly pervasive and "corrupt" influence over American life.

An Unlikely Conservative traces Chavez's own rise from modest circumstances to Republican royalty. We learn that her mother was an "Anglo" divorcée from Wyoming who formed a "blended" family with Rudy Chavez, the hard-drinking, downwardly mobile descendant of wealthy Spanish merchants and landowners whose ancestral home included "much of... modern-day Albuquerque." Only when Linda moved to Denver, where she attended high school and college, did she learn that "Mexicans were looked down on in Colorado—and that included me." Chavez's autobiography sheds new light on the liberal/labor gang-up that similarly surprised her in 2001—and thwarted her Cabinet ambitions. Initially, it turns out, there were unions, including her alma mater, willing to overlook her conversion to conservatism and support her nomination anyway.

> I decided it was time to place a few calls to former colleagues and friends in the labor movement. With my name all over the papers, I had no trouble getting phone calls returned.... [It] was clear from several conversations that some officials welcomed my candidacy.... [A] number of union presidents wanted to be helpful, and none was more solicitous than Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers.

When Chavez soon found herself "caught in the media crosshairs," her fair-weather friend Sandra "smelled blood in the water and had decided to join the sharks." America's "most hated Hispanic" did not enjoy being shark bait. Her memoir concludes with this ominous warning: "I may not have become the AFL-CIO's worst nightmare as secretary of labor—but I intend to remain a thorn in their side."

Written with Daniel Gray, former PR director for the National Right to Work Committee, *Betrayal* is, as promised, a follow-up thrust at unions inside and outside the Beltway. According to the authors, the AFL-CIO has become incurably greedy, violent, radical and a danger to the Republic because of the untold millions it spends, illegally, on Democrats. The Democratic Party, they argue, has become so indebted to "leftist labor unions" that the unions now exercise "veto power over its policy decisions and campaign strategies"—a revelation, I'm sure, to union backers of Dick Gephardt or Howard Dean this year.

Chavez's memoir includes a brief critique of labor's "partisan politics" but nothing quite so imaginative and wide-ranging as the indictment found in *Betrayal*. In *An Unlikely Conservative*, she reveals, for example, that she once personally engaged in such "secret activities" as delivering "several boxes of union-printed campaign leaflets to Ted Kennedy's presidential campaign headquarters in 1980"—before voting for Reagan that year. Generally, however, Chavez has nothing but fond memories of her union work in Washington, during the halcyon AFL-CIO reign of George Meany and Lane Kirkland.

According to Chavez, their ally, Shanker, "expected two things from his employees: that they be smart and that they have 'good

Steve Early has been a union staff member for more than twenty-five years. He denies "shaking down" a single union member—although he has tried to "shake up" a few.

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Relaxation therapy for your feet

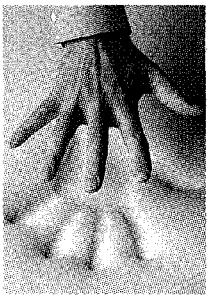
Visco-elastic foam has changed the way people sleep, now it helps the way you walk.

by Leigh Ligon

My feet hurt! How many times have you heard *or* said that…standing in line at the grocery store or simply while doing daily routine tasks? I feel like the older I get the more my feet ache. I've tried elevating my feet, soaking them in hot water and expensive massage therapy—but to no avail. That's why I'm so excited to tell you about my recent discovery—CLOUD 10 Slippers!

How did a NASA invention save my feet? From the moment I slipped them on, they molded to the shape of my feet like I had a custom fit pair of slippers made especially for me! The slipper's insole is made from visco-elastic memory foam originally created by NASA. This foam equalizes pressure, reduces stress and tension and provides incredible comfort.

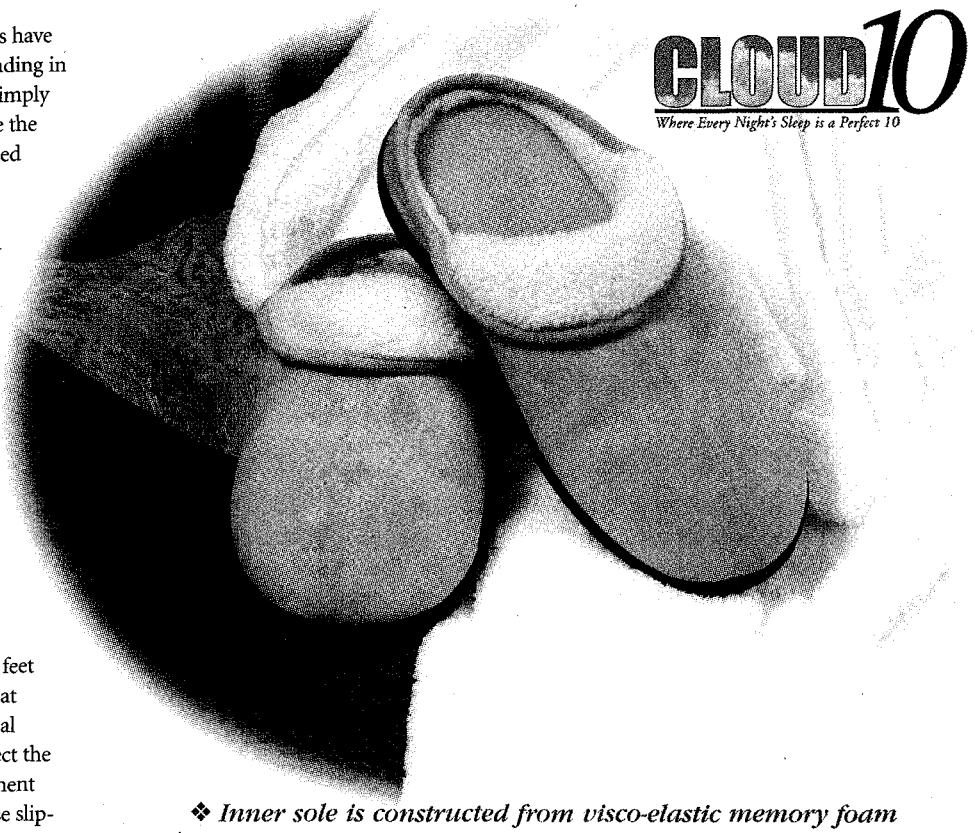
According to the American Podiatric Medical Association, as people age, their feet tend to spread, and lose the fatty pads that cushion the bottom of the feet. Additional weight can affect the bone and ligament structure. These slippers mold to the contours of my feet through my body's heat and weight, literally cushioning every single step I take.



Technologically advanced slippers mold to the contours of your feet making each step feel like your walking on Cloud 10!

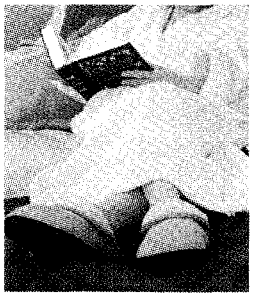
Did you know that the average person takes 8,000 to 10,000 steps a day, which adds up to about 115,000 miles over a lifetime? That's enough to go around the circumference of the earth four times. No wonder we all have tired, aching feet.

I've heard about similar kinds of slippers, but I couldn't afford to spend nearly $70 a pair. The Cloud 10 Slippers were a much better fit for my budget. The outer material of these stylish slippers is beautiful tan faux suede and they feature a cozy, fleece-lined interior and collar to provide added warmth. The durable rubber sole is perfect for my quick trips outdoors to grab the morning paper.



❖ *Inner sole is constructed from visco-elastic memory foam*
❖ *Body heat molds foam to cushion feet for maximum support*
❖ *Super-soft, fleece lining provides added warmth*
❖ *Durable rubber sole—perfect for quick outdoor trips!*

If you have arthritic feet like I do, you suffer from inflammation and pain in your joints. Our feet have to last a lifetime and I've decided to stop neglecting the part of my body that keeps me mobile.



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politics,' which consisted chiefly of being pro-union, anti-communist, and opposed to racial quotas." After Big Al became AFT president, "almost all the leadership positions on staff" went to the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), whose alumni also wielded influence at the AFL-CIO as members of the hawkish Social Democrats–USA. Chavez's proudest achievement was turning the *American Educator*, an AFT magazine, into "a conservative journal of ideas. Not only did we promote Shanker's hard-line anti-communist views with articles critical of China, Cuba, and the Soviet Union, but we also took on affirmative action, ethnic studies, radical feminism...and the 'nuclear freeze' movement."

Thus, by the standards, say, of David Horowitz's youthful wanderings in the Marxist wilderness, very little of Chavez's early career was squandered on causes she regrets today. Her brief flirtation with socialism—now recalled as "liberalism"—involved a political sect so anti-communist that its leaders ended up, like Chavez, on the right. After she leveraged her YPSL connections into an AFT job, she did display a certain subservience to a "union boss" herself—albeit a "true visionary" who transformed her "politically and intellectually." But even while Chavez was collecting a big salary financed by AFT members' dues, she at least tried to spread this "shakedown" money around among other neocons like Robert Bork, Thomas Sowell, William Bennett and Jeane Kirkpatrick—all of whom wrote for her union journal!

In *Betrayal*, the "pro-union" part of Chavez's Shankerite politics is hard to detect. The book is a nonstop diatribe against all unions—clean and tarnished, militant and meek, democratic and undemocratic, liberal and conservative alike. It recycles every timeworn *Reader's Digest* exposé of labor vice—from picket-line violence to project labor agreements—and depicts the labor movement as one big protection racket for criminally inclined layabouts. To put unions in their place once and for all, *Betrayal* seeks a legal crackdown that would leave workers even more defenseless than they are today. Among their "reform proposals," the authors want to repeal the Wagner, Davis-Bacon and Fair Labor Standards acts; eliminate most union political activity; and expand anti-racketeering prosecutions to curb the "legalized terrorism" of strikes and contract campaigns.

The book's accuracy is best illustrated by its repeated use of the adjective "big"—as in "Big Labor," a term employed, by my count, no less than 150 times in 277 pages. Conservatives slapped this same label on their union foes in the post–World War II period, when there was some basis for it—a third of the workforce was organized and nationwide strikes were common in auto, steel, coal and other industries. Fifty years later—after the steady erosion of "union density"—organized labor represents only 13 percent of all workers and just 8 percent in the private sector. Yet somehow, in *Betrayal*, the bogyman of "Big Labor" still stalks the land. Based on any objective measurement—membership size, strike activity or degree of pattern bargaining—"Small Labor" is what actually exists in the United States. Unions today lack the muscle to inflict the economic "harm" for which Chavez blames them, even if "choking the golden goose" by socializing the economy was, as she claims, their actual goal.

Organized labor represents only 13 percent of all workers. Yet somehow, for Chavez, the bogyman of 'Big Labor' still stalks the land.

This inconvenient reality explains why *Betrayal* dwells instead on alleged payroll padding, influence peddling and "mediocrity protection" in labor's last redoubt, the public sector. But, here too, the reader enters a comic book "Bizarro World"—a parallel universe in which familiar people and institutions behave quite unlike their real-life counterparts. For example, politicians—who've often disappointed labor by supporting welfare "reform," privatization, deregulation or trade liberalization—become, in *Betrayal*, fiery tribunes of the working class. To wit, Hillary Clinton: "Like many other leading Democrats, she has moved further to the left in her pursuit of high office, which undoubtedly pleases the labor movement's radical leadership."

Meanwhile, real left-leaning laborites are endowed with hidden influence not heretofore noticed by anyone else (except conservatives suffering from "Big Labor" phobia). In *Betrayal*'s biggest reds-under-the-bed revelation, we learn that the political clout of Democratic Socialists of America didn't peak twenty-five years ago, during the heyday of Michael Harrington. Instead, thanks to the group's closet member John Sweeney, DSA now has a stranglehold over AFL-CIO policy and politics far beyond any imagined by Harrington in his wildest dreams. Whether in cahoots with DSA, the Congressional Progressive Caucus or what "has essentially become the U.S. Labor Party" (*a k a* the Democrats), Sweeney is portrayed as a kind of American Lenin, who "proudly preaches his socialist worldview." Even now, the book suggests, he lurks in the wings of the Kerry campaign, waiting to seize power next January in the business union equivalent of a Bolshevik coup.

Unfortunately, *Betrayal*'s depiction of union financial shenanigans is far more accurate and not at all funny. The book condemns multiple salaries (such as Sweeney's own past double-dipping), padded expense accounts and profiteering by union insiders at the infamous Union Labor Life Insurance Corporation (Ullico). Before even getting to a chapter titled "Money, Mansions, and Mobsters," Chavez and Gray flay the usual suspects—the Teamsters, Laborers and other construction unions, whose past or present racketeering problems have been widely publicized. (According to the authors, of course, "most newspapers bury stories about embezzlement and fraud among labor unions or don't even report them in the first place"!)

Ironically, the most flamboyant thievery cited in *Betrayal* involves the Teachers. Recently convicted AFT kleptomaniacs in Washington, DC, and Miami managed to make off with an astonishing haul—more than $8 million worth of dues money misappropriated for housing, travel, luxury hotel stays, designer clothes, jewelry and other personal uses. Chavez implies, not implausibly, that these criminals were just emulating the lifestyles of the rich, if not famous, folks at union headquarters. In 2000, now-retired AFT president Feldman, who was then "the most powerful woman in the labor movement," earned $354,000—as part of a perfectly legal total compensation package worth more than $525,000. That same year salaries for the union's three top officers alone cost the members $1.1 million.

In her *fatwa* against union "fat cats," Chavez barely acknowledges that others, better intentioned than her, have also inveighed against union corruption and bureaucracy—but then tried to do something constructive about it. After finishing *Betrayal*, any reader previously unaware of recent union reform activity would still never know that tens of thousands of workers struggled, for years, to challenge and change corrupt practices in the Mine Workers, Steelworkers, Teamsters, building trades and maritime unions. (An excellent history of those efforts, titled *Rebels, Reformers, and Racketeers: How Insur-*

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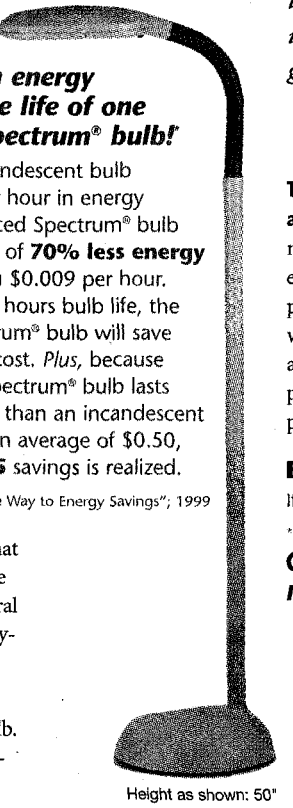

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gents Transformed the Labor Movement, has just been published by Herman Benson, 89-year-old founder of the Association for Union Democracy and a more helpful ex-YPSL member.)

If Chavez had hoped to become—via her latest publishing venture—"the most-hated ex-union member in America," she's going to be disappointed again. With only a book, not a Cabinet post, as her bully pulpit, the author is definitely not labor's "worst nightmare." There's too much corporate competition in that category, at the moment, for any right-wing scribbler to be a major contender. Among workers currently haunted by lost strikes, concession bargaining, privatization, deregulation, free trade, offshoring, outsourcing and virulent unionbusting, Chavez won't even be noticed as "a thorn in their side." ■

MUSIC

Flowers for Albert

BRIAN MORTON

ALBERT AYLER

On the morning of November 25, 1970, the body of a young African-American male was recovered from the foot of the Congress Street Pier in Brooklyn. He was subsequently identified by his father and a fellow musician as the 34-year-old saxophonist Albert Ayler. The name was quickly entered—alongside those of Charlie Parker, Clifford Brown, Booker Little, Eric Dolphy and John Coltrane—in modern jazz's Book of Martyrs. A career that had been forged in fire was quenched in water.

No matter how earthly the music Ayler had forged in his short career, his reputation quickly took off into the ether, and because martyrdom demands a cause and a culprit, rumors spread as to the circumstances of his death, an apparent suicide. Ayler had not been seen for nearly three weeks before he was found. There were stories of police visits to his house. His last companion, singer Mary Maria, who had accompanied him on some of his controversial final recordings, apparently called them in because she was worried about his safety. Some versions hinted that the mob was involved, or drug dealers. There was talk of a bullet wound in the back of Albert's head, though not a whisper of this until he had been buried—sans post-mortem—for the better part of six months. The paranoia became more elaborate with the passage of time, and a recent Internet story repeated the suggestion that Albert's remains were just the human husk of a superior alien being who had been reclaimed by his own.

Instant mythologies usually bespeak an extraordinary and problematic nature, and Albert Ayler had both. There are few more stridently powerful voices in the whole saxophone literature, though few of the greats of modern jazz—perhaps only Ornette Coleman—have attracted more accusations of fakery. Even after a lapse of half a biblical lifetime, and at a moment when a senior and yet more grizzled Ayler might still be playing, his recorded output is still scarifyingly intense. The poet Ted Joans likened an Ayler performance to screaming "FUCK" in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

At least the setting makes sense. Reference books often characterize Ayler's music as ultra-modern, unprecedented, sui generis. In reality, it was deeply conservative, steeped in the blues, field hollers and, above all, in church music. His song titles—"Ghosts," "Bells," "Zion Hill," "Omega," "Spirits"—point to a strongly religious sensibility. For all its seeming radicalism, there is little in Ayler's music that cannot be found in roots r&b. The difference lies in the intensity with which he played it.

Using a Fibercane #4, the hardest plastic reed available, and screaming or growling through his mouthpiece, Ayler played tenor (and sometimes alto) saxophone with a fury that beggars the imagination and makes his forerunner John Coltrane sound tame by comparison. His preferred method was to stitch large-scale musical canvases out of two, three or more of his own starkly beautiful melodies. It was a technique that developed through a long apprenticeship. A child prodigy in Cleveland and winner of

Brian Morton is the co-author, with Richard Cook, of The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD.

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talent contests, Albert became known as the "Little Bird" of his native Cleveland, just one of a host of apostolic successors touted after Charlie Parker's death. Ayler began his professional career in Little Walter's Blues Band, but like many musicians of his generation, he refined his technique as a star soloist with a US Army band, where virtuosity was less important than clear, direct statement. When you listen to Coltrane, lost in some harmonic labyrinth, you wonder whether he's ever going to reach the anticipated climax. By contrast, Ayler seems to take the moment of transcendence as a starting point, a given.

Until recently, finding an Albert Ayler record presented something of a challenge. There weren't many to begin with, the early ones clouded in obscurity, the late ones mostly deleted or compromised in many fans' eyes by Ayler's late turn to an aggressive form of r&b. Where most big record stores stock whole wildernesses of Coltrane—special editions of *A Love Supreme*, boxed sets of "greatest works," absurd collections like *Coltrane Plays for Lovers*—you'd be hard-pressed to find many that could fish you out a copy even of Ayler's 1964 masterpiece *Spiritual Unity*, a trio recording with the bassist Gary Peacock and the drummer Sunny Murray, or an edition of other work that identifies the tunes accurately.

That has changed with the release of *Holy Ghost*, a nine-CD set of previously unreleased Ayler material. These live discs, lo-fi but issued in a beautifully molded "Spirit Box" by Revenant Records (www.revenantrecords.com), almost double the amount of Ayler's music currently available. (As an equivalent, try to imagine someone turning up another four albums' worth of unreleased Charlie Parker studio material or another twenty hours of live Coltrane.) A bonus tenth disc offers a rare glimpse of Ayler the Army musician, but the first real dates are caught during his exile in Scandinavia, where he scuffled a living with local musicians, much as Eric Dolphy did on his fateful trip to Europe in 1964. Back then, Ayler was still playing standard and repertory tunes like "On Green Dolphin Street," "Summertime" and "Sonnymoon for Two." The harmonics are still familiar, even if the articulation is distinctive.

The Revenant set takes its title from Ayler's claim that "Trane was the father. Pharoah was the son. I was the holy ghost." The fact that he attributed divine stature to John Coltrane and his close collaborator, tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, is somehow less striking than that

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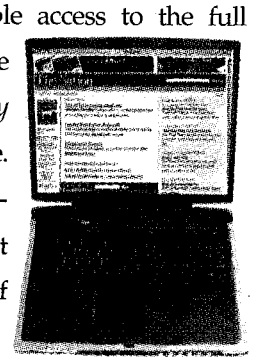

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he should have expressed his own role in the past tense. As a (self-) description, it needs to be looked at very carefully. If it implies that Ayler's music was mystical, otherworldly and evanescent, then it is a deeply misleading description, and unfortunately the one that has gained strongest currency. If it suggests an ambition to remain rooted in the traditions of black music, undisturbed by fashion, then it makes greater sense. It also squares with the religious reverence surrounding Coltrane and the equally obsessive search for his apostles and disciples.

One of the most important and moving tracks on the album is Ayler's performance at Coltrane's funeral in July 1967, a characteristic segue of his compositions "Love Cry" and "Truth Is Marching In." If that was the event that initiated the posthumous Coltrane cult, it should also have offered a hint that his legacy might head in very different, less convoluted directions. This was not to be, however. Coltrane's increasingly baleful influence can be heard almost every time a young saxophonist picks up his horn: harmonic complexity in plenitude, but little sense of structure or order, little of the "story" or "song" Lester Young identified as the foundation of an effective solo. By comparison with the acres of newsprint and glossy columns devoted to Coltrane, it's striking how little space mainstream surveys of modern jazz give to more radical innovators like Ayler and the pianist Cecil Taylor, still a vibrant presence on the scene though he remains entirely outside the mainstream. One of the most precious moments on *Holy Ghost* finds Ayler with Taylor's quartet in Copenhagen in November 1962. Where, four years before, Coltrane had struggled to blend his fissile harmonies with Taylor's supposedly atonal—actually, polytonal—approach, Ayler seems much more at home in this context, stretching his deceptively crude melodic style to fit Taylor's procrustean meter. Even when he was working as a sideman, and playing someone else's material—*Holy Ghost* features Ayler playing under the leadership of, among others, the obscure free-jazz pianist Burton Greene, Pharoah Sanders and the trumpeter Don Ayler, Albert's brother—the saxophonist's iron-hard articulation and "unearthly" wail are unmistakable.

Throughout the Ayler literature there is a suggestion that he never felt entirely at home on this planet, let alone in Ohio, where he was born in 1936 and where many of the live sessions on *Holy Ghost* were taped. He encountered racism in the military and developed a self-protective reticence, even mystery, but nothing that hints at a messiah complex. On the contrary, he was earthly, grounded and hard-working, and he deserves more than an eccentric's spot in recent musical history. It's an irony that his subsequent reputation might rest on these shakily recorded sides rather than on a body of professionally produced work. Even fans of *Spiritual Unity*, *Prophecy* and *Bells* (his trinity of great works) have tended to be dismissive of some of the later work, albums like *Love Cry* (which featured the harpsichordist Call Cobbs, the friend who helped identify his body) and, yet more controversially, *Music Is the Healing Force of the Universe*, with his partner Mary Maria, which marked a turn toward what can only be described as transcendental r&b. *Holy Ghost* gives the aural picture more depth and focus by showing the younger Albert very much locked into the continuity of black music and the older man still very much an explorer, certainly not a glib entertainer.

Friends remember him as quiet and intense, often somber and troubled, but with a strong sense of vocation. It's an impression reinforced by the interview discs included on *Holy Ghost*. At least some of Albert's mystique derived from his appearance, one-half of his goatee beard black, the other prematurely white. (He also took to wearing a specially tailored green leather suit that made him doubly conspicuous on the New York scene.) That made it somehow easier to hear a divided nature in his music. Stories about his death have proliferated over the years. He was known to be in low spirits. Both he and brother Donald were prone to bipolar episodes. Mary Maria called the police because she was worried by his absence, not because she thought malevolent forces were in pursuit of him. Unfortunately, she later changed aspects of her story, which increased the sense of mystery.

Jimi Hendrix died on September 18, 1970, in London, Albert two months later, to significantly fewer headlines. The flurry of conspiracy theories in both cases—why did no one seek assistance for Hendrix; was he in fact alone at the time of death; did a hasty examination miss a bullet wound in Albert's skull?—overshadowed more important conclusions. No serious doubt remains about the cause of Jimi's death (substance abuse) or of Albert's (a depressive's suicide); speculation has only served to dull the recognition that within weeks in 1970 not one but two of the most innovative figures in black American music, both former soldiers who had to make their careers elsewhere, had departed the planet.

Hendrix's music has entered the polite mainstream, name-checked by serious composers, arranged for the Kronos Quartet, performed at classical as well as rock festivals. Ayler's seems unlikely to find a comfortable place in such company, for the time being at least. There are, though, unexpected connections between "avant-garde" jazz and pop. The MC5 took their inspiration from the John Coltrane Quartet. Ian Dury pinched the lick for "Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick" from an Ornette Coleman record. And Albert? Albert is everywhere, though rarely acknowledged. There is as much Ayler as Hendrix in the hard black rock of groups like Living Colour and Fishbone. His deceptively simple, even crude approach is an acknowledged influence on such current cult favorites as Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Sunburned Hand of the Man. He may have cast himself as a ghostly presence, but he still intervenes in human affairs whenever music aspires to conjure spirits. ■

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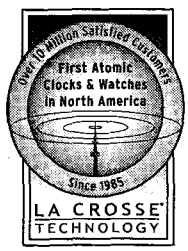

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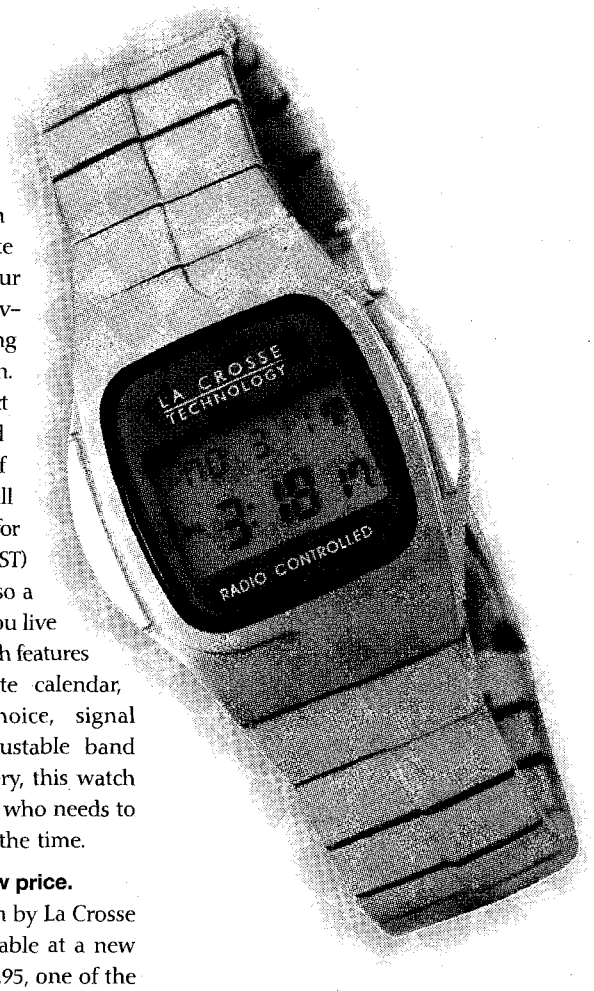

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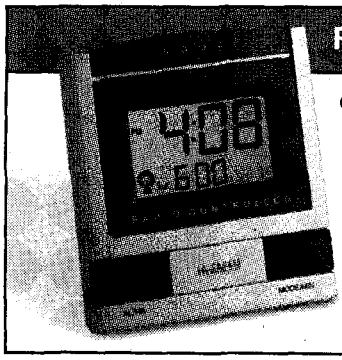

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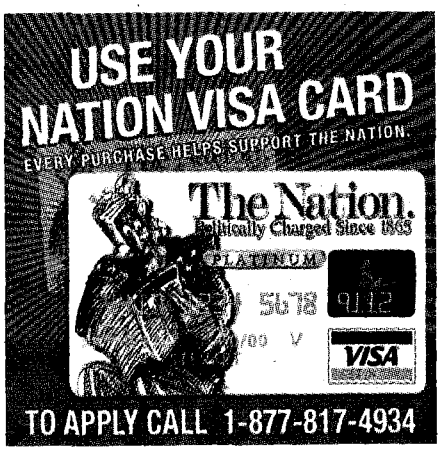

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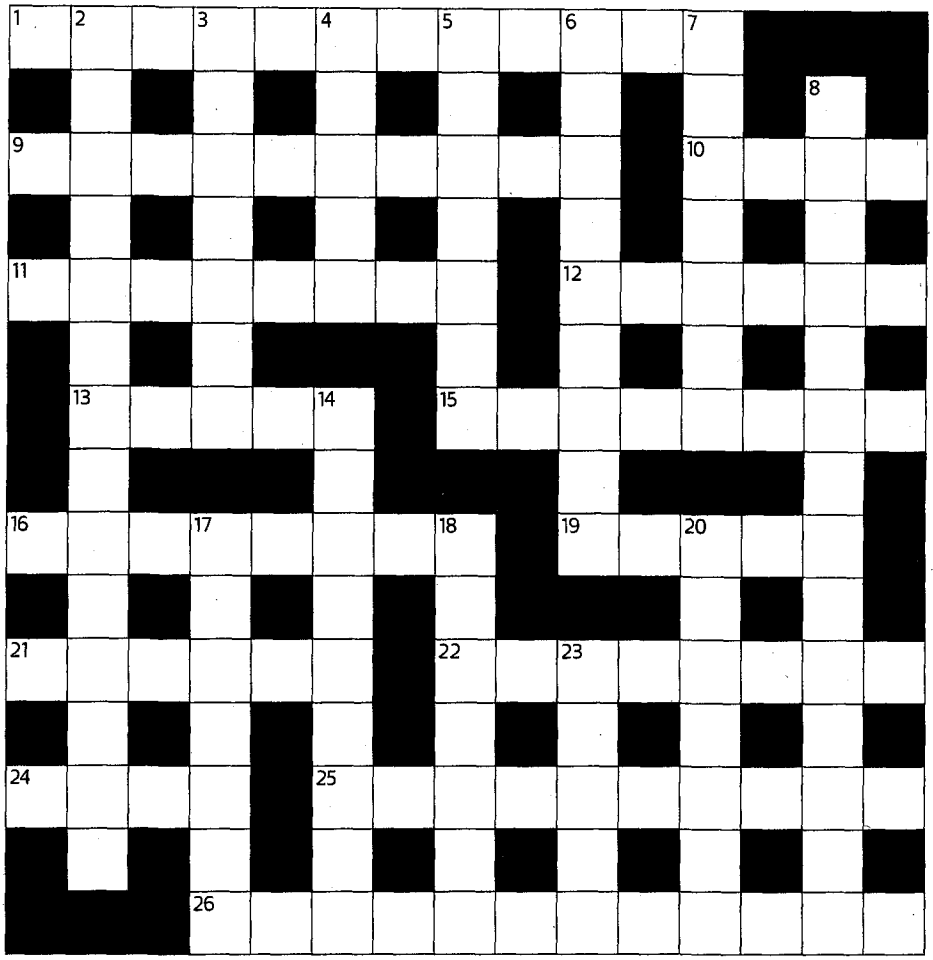

ACROSS

1 The one who scoops too much out, or the one that points out an important direction? (3,3,6)

9 One can't be sure who wrote such things, but it's a service address with a yell to quiet little Harry. (10)

10 See 24

11 A door the girl opens? (8)

12 Its rag is all twisted, which is why you shouldn't pay if so. (6)

13 How Ma might expect the beer to be—but not Pa, it seems. (2,3)

15 Doesn't take out something, which implies you go away from all evil. (6,2)

16 Its ranks could be broken when the old folks talked this way. (8)

19 One has made quite a pilgrimage. (5)

21 Will the light go out with this, along the side of the street? (6)

22 To be direct, you make such a statement. (8)

24 and **10** A good place to hunt for 14 down, according to the way letters from Peter are translated. (4,4)

25 The poor fellow might be even without being floored in the event! (4,3,3)

26 A very strict accompaniment to the dealer going down the Mississippi, perhaps. (5-7)

DOWN

2 A joint on the river where Mary Jane entertains animals. (14)

3 If one is headed into the garage, one might have to, when complaining of something like lumbago this way. (4,3)

4 A pictograph showing part of an ugly phenomenon. (5)

5 His meal is prepared for the outcast, typically. (7)

6 To tell the truth, this expects you to, in order to get no adverse reaction. (9)

7 They will to steps, in return, being a point the President brought up. (7)

8 Not exactly the truth, but seeming to be, if you suffer Site VI Delerium! (14)

14 Given the bird, only a bit of the spine is revealed. (9)

17 What Juvenal wrote, as it comes up, wears one out! (7)

18 It glided along for Tchaikovsky, then was broken and placed around it. (3,4)

20 Seen to get less and less, when the wild wind lets go! (7)

23 A cheap way to get fruit! (5)

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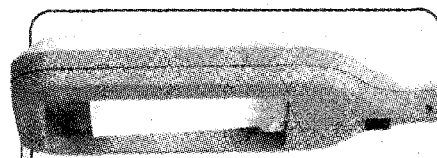
How did we do it. First we used a technologically advanced bulb that emits a purer, whiter light than conventional bulbs. These amazing bulbs produce over 1400 lumens in light output creating more light output than a standard 100 watt bulb from G.E. And we do it efficiently with only 27 watts of power—you can save over 70% of the cost of operating a 100-watt bulb! To make the value even better, this bulb lasts for 5000 hours or more than twice as long as the best selling bulb. More lux...less bucks!

Finally we are offering such a low price because our factory boss wants to be the leader in this new technology. He's invested millions in factory machinery to be the most efficient manufacturer of daylight spectrum lighting. He believes that our SunWhite technology will overwhelm the current lightbulb business and he wants to be the leader in "sunlighting". So don't get ripped off by paying $99-$159 for "sunlighting" technology.

We are so sure that you will love this lamp that we are offering a 60 day money back guarantee. If this light doesn't brighten up your world, make your eyes feel better and even lift your mood, just send it back for a full refund of the purchase price. We can offer this extended guarantee because so few of our lamps get returned to us. We have sold thousands of lamps and it's extremely rare to get a return. Don't strain your eyes for one more day.



- **More light output than a standard 100 watt**
- **Bulb has 5,000 hour life**

Research has shown that daylight spectrum lighting can:

- Improve concentration on schoolwork.
- Make reading easier.
- Ease eyestrain.
- Reveal sharper contrast and truer colors more accurately for reading, art, knitting and needlepoint.

Not all lights are created equal!

GE Reveal™	SunWhite
1352 Lumens	1450 Lumens
100 Watts	27 Watts
No Energy Savings	50-70% Energy Savings
750 Hour life	5000 Hour life

Not available in stores.

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Quietly Setting A Whole New Standard.

Experience the unmatched combination of noise reduction and audio performance of our QuietComfort® 2 Acoustic Noise Cancelling® headphones.

Unwanted noise is everywhere. The engine roar inside an airplane cabin. The blaring sounds of city streets. The annoying din of the office. Bose® QuietComfort® 2 Acoustic Noise Cancelling headphones help you escape them all. Put them on and slip into a safe haven – where you can relax and enjoy peace and solitude or listen to your favorite music.

Proven Noise Reduction Technology.

Our original noise-reducing headphones were designed primarily for airplane travelers. But owners soon started telling us how much they enjoyed using them in other noisy places. So we designed our QuietComfort® 2 headphones around the same patented technology that electronically identifies and dramatically reduces noise, while faithfully preserving the music, movie dialogue or tranquility you desire. The *Philadelphia Daily News* says that "Even in the noisiest environment, wearing these phones creates a calming, quiet zone for easy listening or just snoozing."

Enhanced Comfort and Portability.

Respected columnist Rich Warren says, "The QuietComfort 2 lives up to its name, enveloping you in blissful sound in the utmost comfort. It's easy to forget they're on your head." To enjoy peace and tranquility, simply turn them on. To add Bose quality sound, attach the included audio cord and connect them to a home stereo, laptop computer, portable CD/DVD/MP3 player or in-flight audio system. When you're done, their convenient fold-flat design allows for easy storage in the slim carrying case.

Our Best Sound Ever.

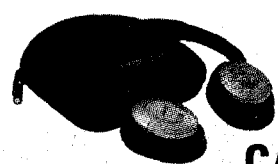
QuietComfort® 2 headphones deliver the best audio performance we've ever developed for headphones. Highs are impressively crisp and clean. Lows are deep and enveloping. Vocals are reproduced with lifelike authenticity. When audio critic Wayne Thompson heard our QuietComfort® 2 headphones, he reported, "Bose engineers have made major improvements." Whether you're looking for noise reduction or high-performance headphones for music, we think you'll agree – QuietComfort® 2 headphones capture the essence of serenity and sound.

Experience Them for Yourself.

We don't expect you to take our word for how dramatically our headphones reduce noise, how clean and full they sound or how comfortably they fit. So we invite you to try them for 30 days, risk free. If you can live without them, return them for a full refund. Order now to receive a free portable Bose CD Player with skip protection – a $50 value. When you call, be sure to ask about our **financing options.**

FREE Bose CD Player when you order by Jan. 31, 2005.

QuietComfort® 2 headphones – the new standard from Bose, the most respected name in sound.



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